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UNCLE NOAH'S CHRISTMAS PARTY

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[This is Miss Dalrymple's first story since the publication of her famous success, "Diane of the Green Van." It is complete in itself, but those who have followed the author's previous work will recognize an old friend in *Uncle Noah*.]

I CHRISTMAS EVE had touched the old plantation with a wand of cheer. Beyond the trees, silhouetted darkly against the snowy fields, the rambling house patched the dusk with squares of light. Holly wreaths, hung in the windows by the solitary old negro servant who had clung to Colonel Fairfax since the days before the war, etched upon the snow ragged shadows of leaves and berries which to Job, the fierce old turkey gobbler prowling about them in mystified interest, were sufficiently deceptive to tempt him into ineffective pecks.

For Job was restless and hungry and presently if the gentle old negro, whose shadow loomed grotesquely on the kitchen shade, did not appear and begin the nightly ceremonial of driving his rebellious pet to roost in the barn, Job would be obliged to revert to the habit of his ancestors and roost, in a supperless manner unbefitting the imperial tyrant that he was—in a tree.

For the fact that Uncle Noah had

forgotten his beloved pet, there were many reasons.

The holly-decked windows and doorways were a reason; the pantry groaning with Christmas delicacies was a reason; the spotless order of the thread-bare old house was still another reason. For young Massa Dick, the Colonel's son, was coming home from the North for Christmas with his wife, Major Verney's niece—and Uncle Noah's Christmas responsibilities had been sufficient to banish for once the needs of his feathered chum.

Ears primed for the jingle of sleighbells, the darky hobbled to the library with a question. Colonel Fairfax rattled his newspaper, lowered his bushy eyebrows and glanced sternly at the clock.

"Certainly it's time they were here," he boomed; "unless those prancing imps of the Major's have run away with the sleigh. It's my opinion the Northern express is late again—must be! 'Pon my word, Patricia, my dear," he added, turning

to his gentle, white-haired wife, "things are not done now as they were in our day. There's a lack of conscience in things—a certain—unreliable—ha—hum!—Uncle Noah—do see to that log. The room's blistering."

Now Uncle Noah knew well enough that the Northern express was not late and that the heat of the room was largely due to the Colonel's impatience to see his son, but he mildly dabbed at the blazing log in the fireplace and cleared his throat.

"'Pears like I hain't never seen sich a Christmasy kind o' log!" he grumbled, showering sparks about, "'Pears to be all sparks an' crackle an' sich-like Christmasy fussin'." He coughed delicately. "Mebbe, sah, mebbe, Massa Dick, 'stid o' lettin' de Major bring young Massa Dick an' Missy Ruth from de Cotesville station—mebbe I jus' oughta hitched up ol' Mingo an' druv in maself. He's mos' powahful spirited, dat Mingo, an' full o' ginger jus' account o' standin' idle in de barn—"

Now Mingo, last of the Colonel's blooded stock, had been dead this many a year and Job was the hermit king of the lonely barn, but this was a flight of fancy in which the loyal darky frequently indulged in stubborn pretense that the old plantation was much the same as it had been in kindlier times.

So to-night the Colonel, a willing coadjutor, gravely shook his head.

"No, no, Uncle Noah," he said. "Major Verney *would* drive into Cotesville himself—insisted upon it—looked to me indeed—ahem! as if he might grow quarrelsome if I denied him the privilege of meeting his niece. Better open a window, Uncle Noah, 'pon my word that is a Christmasy log!"

Uncle Noah obeyed.

"Gord-a-massy, Massa Dick," he exclaimed, peering suddenly over his

spectacles at a shadow beneath the window, "if I hain't gone an' plumb fo'got to chase Job to roost! Fo' de Lawd, sah, if he hain't out dere, pert an' sassy as yoh please, peckin' at de shadder berries on de ground an' a-gobblin' away, jus' to remind me. If he hain't de sassiest bird!" he added in a glow of pride. "Hi, dar, yoh Massa Job Fairfax, yoh jus' git along an' make tracks fo' dat barn. Doan' yoh gobble at me. Hain't I goin' feed yoh soon as I git time to breathe?"

Grumbling benevolently, the old man hurried away to feed and house his pet, and the nightly chase was on. Having pinioned the squawking turkey beneath his arm with an indulgent chuckle, Uncle Noah entered the tumble-down barn where he fed his prisoner and consigned him to a roost of shingles in an ancient, dusty carriage house capacious enough to hint of gayer and kindlier days.

Outside in the quiet rang suddenly the cheery jingle of sleigh-bells and a genial "Whoa!" and Uncle Noah hobbled hurriedly to the door.

"Dar!" he grumbled in mild reproach, "Major Verney back from de Cotesville station a'ready an' I ain't had time to change dis yere ol' ragged coat, jus' sprintin' about in de snow after yoh! G'long, now, yoh quit dat peckin' at my ankles!"

A wild, protesting gobble followed the banging of the barn-door. Uncle Noah hurried back to the kitchen, struggled into his ancient company coat and was presently out upon the porch, beaming over his steel-rimmed spectacles at the laughing group about Major Verney's sleigh.

Through the crisp cold air came the sound of voices.

"Major," exclaimed young Dick Fairfax, smiling, "do come in for a minute anyway. You're nothing like so busy, I'm sure, as you look!"

The Major tugged plaintively at his beard.

"My boy," he urged, "A Christmas bachelor is a very busy man. And Grandmother Verney has built up a list of Christmas duties for me that would pave the road to Cotesville. Now mind, I'll expect you all over to Fernlands to-night. I'll send Uncle Neb over for you at seven-thirty sharp and we'll usher old Grandfather Christmas in to-night over a blazing Yule-log. Out of my way, there, Dick. I'm in a most tremendous hurry!"

"Fol-de-rol!" boomed the Colonel sternly. "Into the house there with you. There's a steaming bowl of toddy on the stove and hurry or no, you'll march in and taste it." He turned suddenly to his daughter-in-law and smiled down into the girl's great gray eyes, so like the Major's. "Ruthie," he added gently, "only you can manage the Major as you manage us all, my dear!" Which seemed to please Dick Fairfax mightily for his dark face glowed and laughing a little, he slipped his arm suddenly about the girl's shoulders.

"Uncle," begged Ruth impetuously, "please *do* come. And hurry," she added with delicate imperiousness as she adjusted Mrs. Fairfax's shawl, "Mother Fairfax's shawl is thin and the air is brimful of Christmas frost."

"My dear!" said the old lady gently as she kissed the girl's smooth young cheek, "you think of everything!"

The Major bowed profoundly.

"When the Christmas Princess wills," said he, "we all obey. Colonel," with an irresistible twinkle, "you're an atrocious old schemer. Out of the way, there, Dick! I can escort my niece indoors without the assistance of a handsome young renegade like you, young man."

Now it was that Uncle Noah, an expectant figure framed in the lamp-light streaming brightly from the

hallway, found himself the target of a hearty avalanche of Christmas greetings at which his wrinkled brown face glowed and shuffling indoors he grandly bowed the Colonel and his family into the library beyond where the blazing woodfire was sending forth its merry shadows to dance upon the pine and holly.

Now what with chuckling and rubbing his hands together—what with wiping his glasses and dropping them and patting young Massa Dick on the shoulder—what with beaming upon the Christmas Princess and wishing everybody the merriest of Christmases in an excited quaver, Uncle Noah was in such a benevolent state of hysteria that action became imperative. Wherefore he seized the poker and attacked the log until the fire leaped and roared up the chimney in a Christmas frenzy of delight.

"God bless my soul, Uncle Noah!" exclaimed the Colonel hastily. "Don't make that log any more Christmasy than you can help. Better bring the toddy. The Major's restless."

Uncle Noah obeyed. And presently as he appeared in the doorway bearing the great, steaming bowl upon a tray, there was a sudden hush. For they were all thinking of another Christmas when the old negro's devotion had mended a quarrel between the proud old Colonel and his spirited son.

And thinking thus—the Colonel raised his glass.

"To Uncle Noah," he said huskily, "and the memory of another Christmas."

Mrs. Fairfax cried a little. And the Major making a vast to-do about nothing at all—furtively patted the old man's back.

II

Now for all Uncle Noah could not remember a time when the old Fairfax house had been so warm with

Christmas cheer, save perhaps in the old days before the war, an irresistible melancholy crept slowly into his heart as he shuffled back and forth preparing supper, and later when Uncle Neb had dashed up with a festive tinkle of sleigh-bells and whisked the Colonel and his family away over the mile or so of snowy roads to Major Verney's, Uncle Noah in his rocking chair by the kitchen fire listened to the dying echo of the sleigh-bells, blinked and swallowed painfully and presently, lighting a queer old lantern, departed for the barn where Job slept soundly upon his roost of shingles.

Unusually silent to-night, Uncle Noah hung the lantern high among the rafters and seating himself upon a rickety stool, prodded the drowsy turkey with a gentle finger. At which Job, somewhat disgruntled, ruffled his handsome feathers and moved away.

"Now see yere, Massa Job Fairfax," began Uncle Noah mildly, "it's Chris'mus Eve an' I hain't reckonin' on spendin' it wif a sleepy ball o' feathers whut ain't apparently got no head. . . . Hum. . . . Whut yoh say? . . . Yoh has got a head but it's kivered? . . . No use talkin', Job, I'se spoiled yoh but—" Uncle Noah gulped and looked away—"Yoh's all I got an' I 'spect like a fool nigger, I'se used yoh mos' like a chile."

The old darky fell silent and finding that Job had relapsed into slumber sighed and buried his head despondently in his hands. Somehow the quiet that lay over the old plantation invested the night with infinite loneliness, peopling the dim and dusty barn with the ghosts of many a by-gone Christmas when Uncle Noah had proudly led the singing darkies who carried in the Colonel's Yule-log.

"Job," he burst forth, vigorously

prodding the fowl again into disgruntled wakefulness, "I doan' 'spect yoh care if yoh hain't got nobuddy belongin' to yoh Chris'mus Eve. I 'spect yoh're so proud an' haughty you doan' mind watchin' de Colonel an' ol' Miss happy wif de young folks. 'Tain't in turkey sense nohow for it to make yoh powahful lonely an'—an'— out of it all but I hain't a turkey an'—an' I hain't had nobuddy belongin' to me since Mammy Chloe died. Hum! Hain't never tol' yoh nuthin' 'bout dat boy o' mine, onliest chile me an' Mammy Chloe ever had, eh, Job? . . . Doan' wish to hear nuthin' 'tall 'bout him, yoh say?"

. . . Uncle Noah's honest eyes grew stern. "Massa Job Fairfax," said he, "yoh hain't made no mistake dis time. Dat boy o' mine, he was a wuthless nigger whut took to drink an' he runned away from de Colonel an' never come back an' he broke ol' Mammy Chloe's heart! Massa Frank Verney, de Major's cousin—he got wild blood in his veins an' he drink an' game an' carry on tremenjüs— an' dat po' weak boy o' mine he crazy-mad admirin' Massa Frank. 'Anything Massa Frank Verney do,' he say stubborn, 'good nuff fo' me!' An' *he* drink an' game an' carry on an' bimeby—sho' nuff, Massa Frank up and bolts away out o' dese yere parts an' dat boy o' mine he git powahful sullen and discontented. Tain't long 'foh he bolts away too, an' any nigger whut runs away from de Colonel ain't wuth his salt. Job Fairfax, I 'clare to goodness, sah, if yoh doan stop sleepin' I'll push yoh off de roost!"

Acutely annoyed by the insistent forefinger, Job awoke with a desperate gobble and lurched indignantly at Uncle Noah's stickpin, whereupon the scandalized darky promptly removed it to a place of safety. For this ancient heirloom which resembled a grain of corn mounted upon a

needle had been a cherished gift from Mammy Chloe.

"Foh de Lawd, Job," grumbled Uncle Noah mildly, "I 'spects yoh'll gobble in dat ol' pin o' mine yet, onliest thing whut I has o' my own. Gawd o' Massy—if I hain't plumb fo'got! I hain't got no Chris'mus gif' foh de Colonel. . . . Hum! Dat comes o' fusteratin' de house all up wif pine an' holly foh young Massa Dick. Now see yere, Job, we gotta git right down to business an' 'cide whut to give de Colonel. I'se plumb scandalized at maself." Uncle Noah frowned and scratched his head.

"Job," he demanded, "whut am I goin' to give de Colonel? Tell me dat. Yoh're so powahful smart—whut am I agoin' to give him? . . . Hum! Job," he exclaimed presently, his kindly face aglow, "foh de Lawd, sah, I believe I'se thought o' de very thing. De Colonel he'll be mos' powahful s'prised an' pleased. Jiminy Crickets! I'se a goin' to buy back de ol' family silver whut me an' de Colonel sold las' year to keep de—de li'l financial crisis a secret from ol' Mis'—de ol' silver tea-pot an' de sugar bowl whut I sold Mis' Porter an'—an' de squatty li'l cream jug an' de spoons an' ladle an' present 'em to de Colonel an' ol' Mis'." And consulting an ancient wallet, protectively girded about with yards upon yards of string, Uncle Noah fell to counting aloud his slender hoard of savings.

It was sufficient; and Uncle Noah's noisy enthusiasm at this knowledge elicited from Job a muffled gobble of reproach. And thus it was that muffled in a faded red scarf, a ragged overcoat and an old fur cap, Uncle Noah presently set forth upon his Christmas Eve adventure, chuckling and peering over his spectacles at the rising moon as it mildly played its brightness upon the ragged ermine of the Christmas world.

III

Turning at length into a steep and snowy road among the pines, Uncle Noah climbed to a farm-house in a belt of cedars where he laboriously unwound his wallet and consulted Mrs. Polly Porter, a stout and comely matron with snapping black eyes and rosy cheeks and a handsome brood of babies.

"Why, Uncle Noah," she exclaimed kindly, "I *am* sorry, dear me! I'm more than sorry. Why, bless your old heart, it's barely a week since I gave the tea-pot and sugar bowl to Aunt Nancy Cary, she liked them so. Dear, dear, that is too bad!" And then as Uncle Noah, considerably crestfallen, fell to winding up his wallet, Polly patted his shoulder, for Polly's plump hand was the patting kind. "Why now, Uncle Noah," she added sympathetically, "I wouldn't feel so badly about it—yet. Dear me, no! I'll give you a note to her and since it's Christmas Eve, I'm sure she'll forgive us. A new neighbor of mine on the Pine Road," she explained pleasantly—"and she lives in the old stone cottage just above here at Bluebird Bend."

So after Polly had written the note, Uncle Noah climbed on up the Pine Road. It was high and lonely up here with the sharp night wind rustling fitfully among the pines through which, far below, glimmered the lights of Cotesville and a train winding luminously along the valley. And presently with a lacy of snowy branches to the left and right, the old Pine Road turned sharply around Bluebird Bend, and below in the Hollow where hordes of hardy bluebirds wintered, twinkled the lights of the old stone cottage.

Now it was astonishing enough surely, for the cottage to have a tenant after a decade or so of desuetude, but for it to have taken on such

an air of festivity brought Uncle Noah to a bewildered standstill on the road above.

Surely the brooding wing of the Christmas Eve as it swept its way over Bluebird Bend had dropped a feather or so of cheer upon the old stone cottage below. For its checkerboard windows glinted gold among the pines—Christmas wreaths hung in the patches of light and from the cottage itself issued such a tremendous and fitful whistling as Uncle Noah fancied he had never heard before. Now it was rapid and shrill and ornamented with trills and quavers and now it was soft and clear, drifting plaintively into the call of a bluebird. Most astonishing of all, however, were certain mysterious shadows upon the window shades.

For in the intervals of silence, there appeared first at one window and then at another, a vanishing pair of shadowy legs and coat-tails, ludicrously evanescent.

Once more the window patch to the left framed a grotesque flash of dangling legs and coat-tails followed immediately by the harsh and quarrelsome call of a crow and Uncle Noah in an irresistible spasm of curiosity scrambled down into the Hollow.

"I hain't never heard no such goin's on afore," he decided in some excitement, "an' them shanks a scitter-witterin' 'bout the windows 'thout a head, hain't no ways reasonable."

The shadowy legs flashed again in a state of startling activity, accompanied by a jumble of very long and somewhat ragged coat-tails. In growing excitement Uncle Noah cautiously made his way to the side of the cottage, hoping for a shade less tightly drawn. He was presently rewarded. Just beyond a dense tangle of evergreen mottled with snow and moonlight, the shade was up, the

checkerboard window ruddy with the shadow of the wood-fire within. And Uncle Noah stared—for somehow the picture beyond opened dim and ancient corridors of memory peopled with forgotten folk of another day.

By a table bright with holly and candelabra sat Aunt Nancy Cary—at least, decided Uncle Noah, it must be she—wondrously garbed in a flowing, old-fashioned gown of lavender brocade, frayed and faded, and a lace fichu and cap yellow with age. But Aunt Nancy's fine dark eyes were still youthful for all the snow of her elaborately coiffed hair, and the foot which peeped from the satin hem, shod in a faded stocking of silk and a lavender slipper—was the small and finely molded foot of the gently bred.

"'Foh de Lawd," murmured Uncle Noah, "if—if dat hain't jus' such a dress as ol' Mis' used to wear afore she married de Colonel. I—I ricomember dem balloon kind o' skirts."

Now as he watched, Aunt Nancy, solitary guest at this Christmas board, poured herself another cup from the Fairfax tea-pot and smilingly nodded a signal toward a shadowy corner.

Instantly there broke forth another mysterious spasm of whistling and out from the shadows where by the crumbs upon his face and clothes he had evidently been conducting a Christmas celebration of his own, appeared Aunt Nancy's entertainer.

Twelve or fourteen years old he was—certainly no more—a young negro lad attired in bright green velvet breeches and an ancient swallow-tail coat evidently built for a very tall man—for the coat-tails dragged in the rear as he walked—and he was grinning impishly, rolling his eyes about with a startling show of white, and deftly performing upon a whistling keyboard of dusky fingers. To

Uncle Noah's scandalized vision he seemed some grotesque bird who had imperative need to hold up his ragged tail—and did so whenever his whistled imitations permitted the withdrawal of half of the dusky keyboard.

And whenever he completed an especially difficult or pleasing passage and Aunt Nancy applauded, this irrepressible young darky performed a rubber-like series of hand-springs and patrolled the room upon his hands with his ragged coat-tails flying.

But even now that the eccentric shadows upon the window shades were no longer a mystery, Uncle Noah lingered, staring first at the old-fashioned lady in lavender brocade and back to the whistling blackbird who was so peculiarly balanced that he was oftener upon his head than on his heels. Somehow this firelit picture dovetailed so quaintly into his cherished memories of the old South that he was quite loath to leave it.

But presently he wiped his glasses—for something in the vivid stir of memory had made his throat ache and his heart thrill to the olden times—and at last he climbed the stone-steps at the front and rapped on the cottage door. Whereupon certain hoarse and deep-toned birds within, who had been conducting a peculiar dialogue, emitted a shrill whistle of surprise and a second later the shade nearest the porch shot ceilingward propelled by the hand of the ragged blackbird in the emerald breeches, and a pair of eyes largely made up of white rolled alarmingly in the direction of the porch.

It was such a house of mystery altogether that Uncle Noah merely awaited developments. They came speedily enough. The young darky proceeded to the other end of the room by means of three hand-springs

and jauntily returned after an interval of marking time with an ancient blunderbus over his shoulder. At which Uncle Noah, staring in some alarm over his spectacles, was minded to retreat, but reflecting that the shade had doubtless been raised for this very purpose, he merely chuckled with gentle malice and continued to wait.

With startling suddenness the cottage door opened and a deep and terrible voice demanded—

"Halt! Who goes dar? Who goes dar, I say?" and following immediately in the normal pitch of a boy's voice, "Sho, Mis' Nancy, tain't nuthin' but an ol' nigger mos' a hundred whut couldn't hurt a flea!"

"Chad!" rebuked the voice within and Chad haughtily discarded his blunderbus and folded his arms.

"Well, whut yoh want, nigger?" he demanded, rolling his eyes about with fearful facility, "rappin' at a lady's country house in dead o' night, right in de middle o' a Chris-mus party an' right middleways o' de program. Answer me dat, nigger!"

Uncle Noah cleared his throat.

"Hum!" said he uncertainly. "Hum!" Whereupon Chad, disarmed by the general benevolence of his victim, suddenly unbent and grinned.

"Sho!" said he grandly, whisking his ragged coat-tails about in a reassuring manner, "doan yoh be afeared o' me, Uncle Jim Crow. I'se Mis' Nancy's Protector an' Cheerer-up an' I has to swell about an' put on airs. An' dat ol' blunderbus"—with a muffled giggle—"hain't nuthin' like so powahful as it looks. 'Sides"—with another giggle—" 'tain't loaded, 'cause it goes off in de corner by itself when it is." And Aunt Nancy's ridiculous protector grinned and rolled his eyes about and indulged in such a grotesque pantomime that

Uncle Noah, irresistibly attracted by his breezy impudence, collapsed with a wheezy chuckle.

"Doan' I git dat stuff off good though?" demanded Chad proudly. "But Gawd-o-massy, nigger, hain't dis a rig, hain't it now? Claw-hammer with a frizzled train an' plush pants! Mis' Nancy she got a trunk load o' dese yere Noah ark duds an' we's celebratin' ol' times. . . . Yas, Mis' Nancy, I'se tellin' dis yere ol' nigger to g'long 'bout his business. . . . Yas'm, I'se askin' him dis yere very minute whut he wants. . . . Whut yoh want, anyway, nigger?" he demanded in a lower voice. "I can't stand yere gossipin' Chris'mus Eve. I'se got mo' business on de program to cheer Mis' Nancy up. An' lemme tell yoh, Mis' Nancy's in powahful need o' cheerin' up to-night."

Uncle Noah mildly explained that he had a note from Mrs. Polly Porter.

"Mis' Nancy, he got a note from Mis' Porter," sing-songed Chad, rolling his eyes fearsomely about, whereupon Aunt Nancy sternly commanded him to bring it in.

Chad delivered the note, spiked to the end of the blunderbus, waited with his coat-tails tucked under his arms and a ridiculous air of deference until Aunt Nancy had read it and rigidly wheeled, marking time. Through the window Uncle Noah watched him turn two hand-springs but he was properly perpendicular when he appeared in the doorway.

"Uncle Jim Crow," said he haughtily, "yoh is a mighty lucky coon! Mis' Nancy she wanta see yoh an' lemme tell yoh now, nigger, she won't see nobuddy down South yere 'cept Mis' Polly Porter. Mis' Nancy she come down South yere to live solitary, she say, an' die in peace an' she cain't have nobuddy a-both-erin' her. I is de public agent whut

conducts all de commercial 'fabulations," a phrase of considerable obscurity. Having delivered himself of which Chad led the way indoors. By the table Aunt Nancy Cary shaded her eyes from the glare of the candles and quietly told Chad to screen the fire.

"I—I beg yo' pardon, Mis' Nancy," stammered Uncle Noah, bowing low like an ancient cavalier, "but I—I'se buyin' back some o' de ol' family silver whut we sold las' year in—in ahem!—in a period o'—o' financial mis-delusion an'—an' upset an' Mis' Porter she sent me up de Pine Road to yoh."

With a hand as finely molded as the lavender-shod foot, Aunt Nancy indicated the Fairfax sugar bowl and the tea-pot.

"They are the ones you mean, aren't they, Uncle Noah?" she asked and shifted the candelabrum so that the light fell full upon the old man's face and left her own in shadow.

"Yas'm," said Uncle Noah and once more produced his wallet and fell laboriously to unwinding it, at which Chad who had been standing by the fire with his coat-tails draped fantastically upon his arm, sniggered at the uncoiling length of string.

"Chad!" commanded Aunt Nancy, "be silent. Uncle Noah," she added, restlessly tapping upon the table with her delicate, fragile hand, "I—I can't very well sell you the tea-pot and the sugar bowl, but since Mrs. Porter knows and is willing—why, I'll gladly give them to you."

But Uncle Noah, though he grandly bowed, gravely continued the gyratory motions of his hand about the wallet.

"Lemme—lemme thank yoh, Mis' Nancy," said he delicately, "but—but a gen'man has scruples."

"I'm quite sure," urged Aunt Nancy gently, "that you wouldn't have me sell a gift!"

The point was irrefutable. Uncle Noah bowed again.

"I reckon yoh couldn't," he owned fairly. "Ladies an' gen'men doan' sell gifs nohow—Colonel, I reckon, 'ud sooner die—an' so in de circumstances, Mis' Nancy, I'se jus' naturally forced to 'cept de sugar bowl an' de tea-pot, but I'se a goin' to present de money foh dem to charity." And Uncle Noah once more began the lengthy process of winding up his wallet.

"Sho!" sniggered Chad, winding up an imaginary wallet, "Sho! Uncle Jim Crow, why doan yoh git a fishin' reel to wind up dat ol' wallet?" And to Uncle Noah's discomfiture Chad's heels suddenly appeared where his head had been and then his head appeared where his heels had been, after which the blackbird rolled his eyes, flirted his coat-tails about and grandly bowed.

"Yas'm," he quavered in tones that made their originator stare blankly over his spectacles. "Ladies an' gen'men doan sell gifs nohow—Colonel, I reckon 'ud sooner die an'—an' so in de—"

"Chad!" rebuked Aunt Nancy sternly. "Uncle Noah," she added gently, "you mustn't mind Chad. He mimics everyone."

Seeming to find the gentle dignity of her guest attractive Aunt Nancy fell to questioning him about the Colonel's Christmas, tactfully drawing the garrulous old negro on and on until flattered by her interest, he somehow rambled far afield, touching now upon the past and now upon the present until the clock upon the mantel struck ten.

"Jiminy Crickets, Mis' Nancy," he exclaimed, "I'se gotta go. I'se gotta collect de spoons an' de ladle yet an' de squatty li'l cream jug." And shuffling hurriedly to the door he bowed. "Good night, Mis' Nancy, an' Merry Chris'mus."

"Good night, Uncle Noah," said Aunt Nancy kindly, "and let me—let me wish that you and the Colonel and Mrs. Fairfax will have such a merry Christmas as—as you tell me you used to have." And Uncle Noah fancied her voice seemed very tired and he blamed himself for lingering so long.

Outside the house he anxiously consulted Chad about the proper disposal of the money which he felt Aunt Nancy had indirectly contributed to charity.

Chad considered.

"Humph," said he, "if yoh wanta please Mis' Nancy I guess yoh better take dat money an' make a Chris'mus foh dem five white trash Ardusi kids whut live at de foot o' de Pine Road. Tony Ardusi he run errands foh Mis' Nancy when I got mo' important business 'bout de house an' Mis' Nancy she worry 'bout him a lot. Ol' Pap an' Mom Ardusi drink lickie an' young Tony he gotta mind de kids. Get along now, Uncle Jim Crow. Yoh've held up de Chris'mus program long enuff blowin' 'bout de Colonel's family."

"Hum!" commented Uncle Noah as he climbed to the road above the Hollow, "how'd Mis' Nancy know ma name was Uncle Noah? 'Spect mos' likely Mis' Porter mus' have wrote dat in de note."

But Mrs. Porter had not. And had Uncle Noah known it—had he known too that behind in the cottage in the Hollow, Aunt Nancy Cary had fallen forward upon her knees sobbing and shaking so wildly that Chad had run to her side in alarm, helped her gently to a chair by the fire and forthwith in accordance with his singular conception of "cheering up" begun the performance of such extraordinary antics of body and mouth that his mistress fell to laughing through her tears, he would have wondered greatly.

IV

Now as Uncle Noah shuffled spryly in sight of the dilapidated Ardusi house at the foot of the Pine Road, he caught sight of a forlorn and ragged little figure upon the porch. It was Tony Ardusi, staring miserably up the lonely road. Uncle Noah's kindly heart warmed to the wistful little watcher in the moonlight, then he drew noiselessly into shadow. For Tony was praying, a swift, broken murmur of Italian to the Holy Mother and when at last the boy ended, staring stonily again up the moonlit road, Uncle Noah approached and touched him diffidently on the shoulder.

"Whut—whut yoh watchin' foh, Tony?" he ventured gently.

Tony shifted restlessly, then with a pitiful glance into the sympathetic face before him he sobbed and buried his face in his hands, no longer the grave, old-fashioned understudy of an alcoholic mother with a conscience of responsibility far beyond his years, but an unhappy child facing the specter of a barren Christmas.

"Oh, Uncle Noah," he blurted with a great gulp, "I gotta sit here an' watch 'cause Teo an' Toddy an' Tommy an' Therese got sleepy an' they made me promise to watch sharp. They're afeard ol' Kris might go by without stoppin' an' all the time I know he can't never come here 'cause I—I hain't got no Chris-mus money—pop he found it." The boy's dark face reddened—then he fiercely caught his breath and hid his face again.

Uncle Noah patted the boy's head.

"Doan' yoh go foh to givin' out, now, Tony!" he crooned kindly. "Yoh is a mos' powahful brave li'l man, everybuddy say so. Where's yo' mammy?"

Tony silently nodded at a brightly lighted house across the fields from

which floated the Bacchanalian wail of an accordion and the clatter of dancing feet.

"Hum!" snorted Uncle Noah, "skylarkin' de Holy Chris'mus in, eh?"

Tony reddened.

"I—I prayed," he said in a low voice, "I prayed for somethin' Christmasy to happen—"

"Sumthin' Chris'masy goin' to happen!" announced Uncle Noah with decision and coughed delicately. "Now, see yere, Tony, I'se jus' come into a—ahem!—a li'l bit o' money (Tony had vague and thrilling notions of a vast inheritance) an' I'se agoin' to see yoh through dis yere Chris'mus. Hain't no use givin' yoh money 'cause like as not yo' daddy 'ud git it, so I'se goin' to hab a li'l Chris'mus party an'—an' a Chris'mus tree in de Colonel's barn an' yoh goin' tell dem poor chillun dat ol' Kris he done sent a messenger to yoh, 'splainin' his delay an' whut he goin' do foh yoh Chris'mus night."

Tony's great black eyes blazed.

"Oh, Uncle Noah," he choked, "Uncle Noah!" And ended with a passionate shower of Italian. Uncle Noah stared blankly over his spectacles.

"Tony," said he, "I cain't no how understan' dat heathen sputterin', but I'se goin' to collect yoh all 'bout eight to-morrow night in a—a carriage. Dem two miles is mos' too much walkin' foh de li'l chillun. An' now I'se a-goin' into Cotesville an' buy de Chris'mus trimmin's."

There was fortunately little difficulty in buying back the Fairfax spoons, the cream jug and the ladle, and presently, his heart alive with the merry spirit of the Christmas night, Uncle Noah halted before a store, bright with lights and piles of holly and asked a lounge where he might "rent" a horse and wagon.

The lounge instantly awoke into active interest.

"Why say," said he generously, "suppose you take this outfit o' mine," carelessly indicating a cart and a somewhat angular beast by the curb, "he hain't so much on looks, perhaps, but he's big and strong—"

Uncle Noah unwound his wallet.

"How much foh de beast 'til mornin' after Chris'mus?" he queried politely.

Evidently staggered, the lounge glanced hurriedly about him and scratched his chin.

"Say two dollars," he offered magnanimously. Which offer Uncle Noah accepted.

"Hum," he demanded as he wound up his wallet again, "whut—whut yoh call dis yere ol' nag anyhow?"

Again the lounge scratched his chin.

"Oh," said he, "call him—call him Fiddle-de-dee. And when ye bring him back, just tie him to this here post outside the store. I'll be somewhere about."

Beaming benevolently Uncle Noah drove off, uncomfortably conscious that Fiddle-de-dee's rump was abnormally steep, that his huge feet were rarely in perfect accord and that he was greatly addicted to snorting.

"I hain't never seen a horse like this afore!" he muttered as Fiddle-de-dee suddenly broke into a grotesque gallop. "Shanks all 'pear to work separate an' I cain't see much over dis yere mountain o' a rump ahead. Anybuddy whut sits on yo' rump, Fiddle-de-dee," he added with some disdain, "'ud toboggan off yo' head. An' Fiddle-de-dee hain't no kind o' a name for a horse anyhow."

Thus it was that near midnight, serenely unaware of a certain commotion outside the store where he had acquired the giant Fiddle-de-dee Uncle Noah drove out of Cotesville,

his cart laden with a Christmas tree and tinsel trimmings, the Fairfax silver and provisions for Fiddle-de-dee and the Christmas party. And presently as he thundered by Major Verney's fine old house, somewhat alarmed by the snorting Fiddle-de-dee's sudden heel-and-toe notions of speed, he caught the echo of the Christmas bells which far behind in Cotesville were gaily ringing in the Christmas morning.

"Hum!" said he blankly, "wonder whut de Colonel goin' say 'bout dat Chris'mus barn party o' mine. Funny, hain't had time nor wit nuff to think o' that afore."

Somewhat discomfited, Uncle Noah thundered on to Brierwood.

"No use talkin', Uncle Noah Fairfax," he soliloquized later, staring uneasily at the kitchen fire, "I'se in considerable o' a pickle, hain't no gittin' round dat. Colonel he goin' think I'se pretty pert invitin' guests o' ma own when Major Verney an' his ol' mother comin' over yere to help de Colonel celebrate de Chris'mus night. An'—an' de Colonel he so powahful proud an' stern, like as not he won't want dem white trash Ardusis in de barn. Reckon Job hain't goin' be any too pleased either. I 'clare to goodness I'se plumb kerflusterated." And Uncle Noah fell desperately to polishing the Fairfax silver. "No use talkin', Uncle Noah," he added sternly, "yoh gone an' got yo'self into a pickle, invitin' guests to de Colonel's barn. Whut's mo', yoh cain't no-how disappoint dem poor li'l chillun an'—an' I reckon yoh jus' gotta hold dat barn celebration on—on de quiet an' mebbe tell de Colonel de day after."

V

And in the morning with a giant Christmas wind rattling the old house and barn, there was a new di-

lemma to face. Fiddle-de-dee, contraband necessity for the Christmas party, was proving something of a responsibility. At dawn he had taken to drumming away on the barn floor with his hind foot until Uncle Noah, dismayed at his fiendish persistence, had crept indignantly out to his stall, thumped him mildly across the flank and muffled his clumsy feet in rags. And now as he absently prepared breakfast after a sleepless night of anxiety and furtive preparation for his party, Uncle Noah desperately fancied he could catch certain impish snorts above the howl of the Christmas wind. How account for Fiddle-de-dee if the Colonel grew suspicious!

From the library came the boom of the Colonel's deep voice:

"Well, Dick, my boy, a windy night and a very noisy one, eh? I slept but little myself—"

With a smothered groan Uncle Noah shuffled suddenly to the library and bowed the family in to breakfast.

Now conspicuous upon the breakfast table this windy Christmas morning were certain pieces of old family silver of which the Colonel had frequently thought, with acute remorse while inexorably keeping the secret of their sale from his wife. And so as his keen eyes encountered first the Fairfax sugar bowl and then the cream jug, glinting cheerfully among the holly, his face turned very hot and red and he furtively wiped his glasses. When at last he could trust himself to meet Uncle Noah's anxious gaze there was a mute tribute in his eyes from which the darky turned hastily away, blinking with a sense of terrible guilt. After all he would have seen a trifle less confidence and regard in the Colonel's eyes had the latter known of the monster Fiddle-de-dee smuggled away in the barn.

To Uncle Noah, tortured victim of his own benevolence, it was an unforgettable Christmas. In the barn Fiddle-de-dee drummed with a rag-muffled hoof, snorted fierily and invented an endless variety of barn noises. Finding presently that hourly portions of oats appeared to quiet the incubus for a time at least, Uncle Noah fell desperately to feeding him. But Fiddle-de-dee's capacity, like his general architecture, was unusual; moreover, he increased alarmingly in girth, whereupon the distracted darky, fearful of his eventual inability to get the ridiculous animal through the barn doorway, abandoned the stuffing process and thereafter made as much noise in the kitchen as he could preparing dinner.

Thus the Christmas wore away with the wild wind rousing spectral phantoms of snow-dust from the barn-roof. And at half past seven, Uncle Neb brought Grandmother Verney and the Major over from Fernlands. So at last with the Colonel and his guests drawn up around a blazing Yule-log in the library, Uncle Noah stealthily drove the muffled Fiddle-de-dee forth to the Pine Road.

It was not yet eight. A fitful moon scudded wildly before the winter wind.

"Mebbe now, mebbe Mis' Nancy 'ud come to dat Chris'mus party o' mine," mused Uncle Noah, glowing. "Aye, golly, I reckon me an' ol' Fiddle-de-dee 'll jus' gallop up de bend an' ask her afore we collects dem Ar-dusis."

Again the cottage at Bluebird Bend was bright with lights and window wreaths; again from the Hollow came the muffled imitation of hoarse and quarrelsome birds unknown to man; and once more as Uncle Noah climbed the stone steps, the nearest shade shot ceilingward revealing Aunt Nancy in her laven-

der brocade and Chad, who threateningly swung back the door, rolled his eyes and shouldered the ancient blunderbus with a giggle.

"Well, whut yoh want now, Uncle Jim Crow?" he demanded loftily. "Hain't no mo'n started up de program dis time an' Mis' Nancy's powahful sad. . . . Mis' Nancy, Uncle Jim Crow he come climbin' up yere again an' Lawdy! he got an ol' green swaller-tail on hisself an' white gloves an' holly in de button-hole o' his over-coat."

Aunt Nancy sternly commanded Chad to bring the Christmas visitor in and was obeyed.

"Mis' Nancy," began Uncle Noah, bowing, "would yoh"—he cleared his throat—"would yoh mebbe come to ma Chris'mus party in de Colonel's barn? I'se got a tree foh dem poor Ardusi chillun out o' de—de charity money—an'—an' a dinner an' evergreen an' holly an' candles. I spec's it goin' be mighty fine when I lights up dem colored candles."

Aunt Nancy made a swift gesture of dismay.

"No, no, no, Uncle Noah!" she exclaimed. "I couldn't go, indeed I couldn't! I'm sorry, but I don't go out at all except now and then to Mrs. Porter's." Aunt Nancy's fine old face went very white and with trembling hands she shifted the candelabrum.

"Mebbe," urged Uncle Noah, "mebbe yoh'd jus' come along in de cart an'—an' inspect de Chris'mus decorations if yoh couldn't stay. Dey is—dey is certainly splendiferous. I stayed up mos' all de night, Mis' Nancy, trimmin' up de wagon house an'—an' Job, ma ol' turkey, he hain't none too much pleased 'bout de holly fixin's on his roost. An'—an' de Colonel he doan know nuthin' 'tall about it—'clare to goodness he so powahful stern an' strict I doan' dare tell him. If yoh'd jus' come

along an' look at de Chris'mus rig-gins whut yoh presented to charity, I—I'd be mos' powahful pleased." And the wrinkled brown face beneath the fringe of white wool was very anxious and expectant.

Aunt Nancy shook her beautiful snowy head.

"No, no, Uncle Noah," she said faintly—"we couldn't—indeed we couldn't. It's good of you to think of us, but Chad and I, you see, we have these queer old-fashioned things on to celebrate Christmas."

"Hain't nobuddy gwine see yoh, Mis' Nancy!" urged Uncle Noah wistfully. "Hain't nobuddy knows!"

Aunt Nancy glanced furtively at Chad—he was standing by the fire with his ragged coat-tails over his arm, his eyes alive with boyish interest.

"Sho', Mis' Nancy," he burst forth eagerly, narrowly averting a catastrophe as his coat-tails dropped in the fire. "Sho! Hain't goin' be no harm if Uncle Jim Crow bring us straight back up de Pine Road. I'se mos' powahful anxious to see dat party." And because to-night was Christmas and Chad's faithful regard for his mistress worthy of suitable holiday reward, Aunt Nancy weakened. Surely a truant glance at the Colonel's barn could harm no one! And so a little later Uncle Noah bore Aunt Nancy and Chad off down the Pine Road.

From the Ardusi house ahead floated presently the lively strains of an accordion, the clink of glasses and the hum of voices and laughter as Niccolo Ardusi and his friends made merry within.

Chad snickered.

"Tony, Teodoro, Tommaso, Toddy and Therese!" said he, glibly naming the Ardusis. "Ol' Mom Ardusi long on de letter T. I calls dat shack de T-pot, doan' I, Mis' Nancy?" And in truth with the

lurching chimney upon the roof from which smoke faintly curled, the Ardusi domain did somewhat resemble a gigantic battered tea-pot with its steaming spout awry.

Now if Uncle Noah and his guests had not been so greatly alarmed by Fiddle-de-dee's sudden terpsichorean attitude toward the Ardusi accordion, they might have noticed that the juvenile exodus from the T-pot was a very furtive and silent one. On behind Tony, who had washed and combed and dressed his little brood into Christmas presentability, marched a ludicrous quartette: Teo in a ragged suit of Tony's which needed considerably more leg below the knee logically to complete it than Teo possessed; Tommy conscientiously muffled in a faded red table cover which served as hat and coat in one; and Toddy topped by a startling black skull-cap rescued from a rag-bag from which his generous ears, protruding, testified to the excellent sandwiching qualities of Mom Ardusi's disciplinary thumb and forefinger. Tiny Therese in deference to her sex wore holly in her hair.

Very gravely Tony marshaled his obedient brood to the cart and helped them in, four pairs of solemn black eyes riveted expectantly upon his face for orders as he joined them. Then with skilled glance he reviewed the silent line and halted at the skull-cap.

"Toddy," said he severely, "fold your ears in!"

Meekly Toddy folded in those lobular nuisances beneath the skull-cap.

Thus with Uncle Noah in his green swallow-tail mildly fuming at Fiddle-de-dee's steep rump outlined in vision-interfering angles against the moon, with Chad, himself singularly accoutred, performing upon his whistling keyboard of dusky fin-

gers for the staring Arduis, with Aunt Nancy, a little pale, nervously drawing her cloak about the lavender brocade, the cart set forth. Once the irreverent wind meddled to some purpose with Toddy's skull-cap and instantly—

"Toddy, fold your ears in!" came from Tony. Meekly Toddy obeyed.

So Uncle Noah's Christmas party rumbled stealthily into Brierwood.

VI

Having disposed of his cart and steed in a patch of shadow beside the barn, Uncle Noah led his guests to the carriage house. And as he hurried about lighting a pair of ancient lanterns and the colored candles in the Christmas tree, Aunt Nancy, heartily praising it all, glanced at the rafters twined with holly, at the old oil-stove fanning forth a vivid search-light across the floor—at the barn-windows diplomatically veiled in squares of cheese-cloth—and then back again at the glorified faces of the speechless Arduis and the delighted face of the old negro by the Christmas tree—and her eyes grew very moist and bright.

Brave little Tony and his eager brood! Only Job appeared to find in the Christmas trimmings about him excellent cause for grievance for he emitted offensive and critical gurgles and planned attacks upon the holly-berries about his roost.

Cheeks aflame, Tony unwrapped his staring quartette. At which Toddy rebelled. Having folded in his ears with uncommon snugness he flatly refused to doff the skull-cap.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Aunt Nancy, who had gently removed Therese from a mysterious wrap of great fuzziness, "the child's dress is on wrong side out, Tony!"

"Yes'm!" owned Tony politely. "I did it. She's cleaner with the dirt turned in."

Aunt Nancy's laugh had the ring of tears in it.

"It's all so wonderful, Uncle Noah," said Aunt Nancy presently, "so warm and bright and full of Christmas cheer that I hate to leave it all—indeed I do—but Chad and I must go." And Aunt Nancy, who had been a little restless ever since their arrival, glanced at Chad who curtailed a particularly difficult hand-spring and looked dismayed.

"Golly, Mis' Nancy," he protested, "we hain't no mo'n squinted at de decorations whut it took Uncle——"

There was an unexpected interruption.

The barn door swung noisily back and a tall and gaunt mountaineer swung in, cracked his heels together and spat hostilely upon his hands.

"Horse-thief!" said he. And spat again.

The silence was electric. By a common instinct four Ardisis foregathered about Tony's knees. Aunt Nancy drew back into shadow.

"Whut—whut yoh mean?" demanded Uncle Noah at length, staring horrified over his spectacles.

"Hain't I follered you down the Pine Road here?" demanded the interloper elaborately. "Don't I know his shadder agin the moon? Hain't he tied out there now with his hoofs muffled in rags? Stole him last night ye did—and I hain't had a single clue till I watched ye gallopin' by Porter's farm!" And the visitor forthwith removed his coat, danced upon it, whooped to the negro's utter dismay and announced his unfriendly intention of taking it out of Uncle Noah's hide.

Now whether or not this peculiar surgical operation would have been consummated or not remains a matter of doubt. Flushed and panting, Mrs. Polly Porter suddenly appeared in the barn doorway, her eyes snapping fire.

"Bill Porter," she said flatly, "you're a fool. Uncle Noah, don't you mind Bill. He's my brother-in-law from the mountains and he's quarrelsome by nature." She turned fiercely to the wilting pugilist. "I've run after you all the way down the Pine Road to tell you how that loafer Ned Scruggins rented your horse to Uncle Noah last night for a joke. You cover ground like an ostrich. Billy Scruggins came to the farm to-night for milk and bragged about it to my Joey. Can't you see the dear old man is as honest as he is scared? Bill Porter—March!"

Crest-fallen Bill Porter marched. From the driveway came presently the rag-muffled thud of hoofs as he claimed his own. It was Aunt Nancy who awoke to the exigency of the situation.

"Uncle Noah," she cried, "they mustn't go—No—No! Don't you see it's the only way Chad and I have of getting home?" She was at the door now staring wildly into the dark.

In an instant Uncle Noah was beside her. "Gawd-o-massy, Mis' Nancy," he whispered, "doan' yoh go foh to callin' out. Colonel he got queer ears. He mos' always hear whut yoh doan' mean him to hear."

"Call out!" exclaimed Aunt Nancy, blanching, it seemed, at the very thought. "I—I couldn't, of course. I—why, Uncle Noah, I—I wouldn't *dream* of such a thing."

"Sho' Mis' Nancy," broke in Chad, secretly delighted at the mishap, "cain't we stay de party out now? Bimeby I'll hoof it into Cotesville and git a nag to take yoh home. I—I 'clare to goodness I'se mos' pow'ahful interested in Uncle Jim Crow's party fixin's an'—an' he say he gotta roast turkey an' need me to help serve de chillun."

"Chad," exclaimed Aunt Nancy impatiently, "I can't—I can't indeed—"

"Nobuddy else goin' see yoh an' Chad in dem clothes, Mis' Nancy," urged Uncle Noah, "now dat wild heathen pusson got his nag back. Gawd-o-massy, I'se all o' a tremble. Hain't no sense o' him rarin' up in de door-way an' makin' all dat terrible confustication over Fiddle-de-dee. 'Clare to goodness I—I wouldn't have dat nag foh a gif'."

Aunt Nancy glanced furtively at Chad's eloquent eyes. After all, the Christmas at Bluebird Cottage had not filled all the holiday hunger of youth. And Chad was young and faithful for all his impudent antics. Chad saw her face relent and inverted himself with a muffled whoop.

So it was that Chad served the dinner which Uncle Noah stealthily bore from the Fairfax kitchen.

There were candies and oranges at the end for the saucer-eyed Ardusis who had eaten their way steadily through the party in petrified silence and in the midst of it all to Uncle Noah's unspeakable pride Job flapped his wings and gurgled his immediate intention of fighting Chad who had conceivably been disporting himself too freely on his hands in lieu of feet. And with every eye bent upon the bristling turkey and Toddy surreptitiously folding in a truant ear, the barn door swung back.

"Uncle Noah," boomed a deep significant voice, "there is a gentleman here who accuses you of kidnaping his children!"

Slowly Uncle Noah swung round on quaking knees, his spectacles hanging perilously upon the end of his nose. It was the Colonel! At the head of the Christmas table Aunt Nancy shielded her eyes with her hand.

"Gawd-o-massy, Massa Dick," stammered the flustered negro desperately, "I—I hain't been kidnapi'n' no chillun—'fo' Gawd, sah, I hain't."

"He came ringin' my door-bell,"

boomed the Colonel sternly, "and he says he traced his children to my barn through the clue of one—Bill Porter."

A heavy silence fell upon the barn. Shadowy feet shuffled uneasily behind the Colonel. Uncle Noah adjusted his spectacles and scratched his white poll despairingly.

"Massa Dick," he confessed, "I—I'se goin' tell de truth. I'se in considerable o' a pickle. Dem poor Ardusi chillun didn't have no Chris'mus—ol' Nick Ardusi he drink lick—an'—"

He was interrupted by the rushing entrance of Mrs. Ardusi who flung a soiled apron over her head in hysterical abandon.

"Madonna mia!" she shrieked, "the poor bambini! No hava da Chris'mus day—no hava da Chris'mus day!" She fiercely shook an inconsistent fist at her husband and fell to sobbing and wringing her hands in a belated outburst of maternalism. At which the younger members, of her truant brood promptly raised their voices in a chorus of howls and joined her.

The Colonel held back the door.

"Nick," he said, "hereafter I shall personally keep an eye upon these children of yours and if I find them neglected—" He raised significant eyebrows.

Niccolo Ardusi, in whose heart lay dormant the love of the true Italian for his children, shuffled guiltily and looked away.

"Si, Signor," he said sullenly. "I unnastan'."

Crooning and chattering hysterically, Mrs. Ardusi wrapped up her weeping babies and departed. And from the driveway as they went floated Tony's weary voice.

"Toddy," it said, "fold your ears in!" Conceivably Toddy obeyed.

The Colonel turned expectantly to Uncle Noah.

"Uncle Noah," he begged politely, "may I be enlightened as to the—er—mysterious leg-shadows upon the barn-windows to-night? Have you—"

"Gawd-o-massy, no! Massa Dick, tweren't me!" exclaimed the mortified darky, dropping his spectacles. "Dem weren't ma ol' shanks. Dat—dat were Chad yere. He powahful light-headed, sah, an'—an' can't keep on his feet."

The Colonel glanced keenly about him, stared at Aunt Nancy and bowed.

"I was unaware that you were entertaining," he said with gravity. "I beg your pardon." The barn door creaked upon its rusty hinges as he departed. Uncle Noah weakly mopped his forehead. That was the Colonel's way. There would be a reckoning later.

White and trembling Aunt Nancy rose.

"Uncle Noah," she whispered, moistening her lips nervously, "I too must go now. I—yes after all I am quite sure I can climb the Pine Road."

Again the barn door swung back and the Colonel's head appeared.

"Uncle Noah," said he, "if you could manage to spare me a minute or so presently my own guests are in need of some light refreshment before they return to Fernlands. Ah, Major," as a footstep sounded on the walk behind him, "anxious to finish that game of chess, eh? I'll be there directly."

"Find Nick's kids?" demanded Major Verney, laughing. "Grandmother Verney's dying with curiosity." The Colonel moved aside.

"Uncle Noah," he said, "won't mind, I'm sure, if you look at his tree. He's entertaining."

Now at the sound of Major Verney's deep voice, Aunt Nancy's hand had desperately slipped to the old-

fashioned pocket at the side of her gown and as he peered within, his eyes twinkling at the homely cheer of the picture, she stood with one hand clutching the table, a trembling figure of another day holding a faded lavender mask before her face. And as she did so, Uncle Noah knew why the picture behind the firelit window of the cottage in the Hollow had brought stirring memories of the olden South, for, oddly enough, the lavender mask was a link in the chain of memory. Swiftly the old negro's thoughts went winging back to a snowy Christmas eve when the Colonel was young, when the young people of the old plantations about had gaily danced the Christmas in at a masquerade here at Brierwood, when Grandmother Verney's beautiful young ward, Phoebe, the child of a distant kinsman, had eloped with the Major's wild and handsome cousin, Frank. And Phoebe Verney had been the Major's sweetheart . . . and the Major had never forgotten. That was why old Grandmother Verney, grim and unforgiving, still held her solitary sway at Fernlands. So in the silence of the Christmas-bright barn, Uncle Noah stared and stared. For the lavender brocade was the gown of Phoebe Verney!

Swiftly the negro glanced at the men in the doorway. The Major's face was quite colorless.

Faded mask and lavender brocade! Save for the snowy hair and the delicate wrinkled hand, it was the wilful girl who had broken faith with him that unforgettable Christmas Eve to leave her place in his life but an empty memory. Only the face had changed and that Aunt Nancy's hand had masked with a memory link ironically familiar!

The Colonel drew back.

"Phoebe!" said the Major, a great choke in his throat, "My God!"

Aunt Nancy pointed at the barn door, her hand shaking pitifully. Only the eyes behind the lavender mask blazed in a sudden agony of pleading.

"Go!" she whispered. "I—I cannot bear it." At which Chad loyally shouldered his way to Major Verney.

"Cain't yoh hear her say 'Go!'?" he demanded truculently. "Hain't I Mis' Nancy's protector! Hain't she had trouble enough livin' poor an' lonesome all dese years?"

"Chad!" rebuked Aunt Nancy, but the rebuke was a whisper and Chad did not hear.

"Hain't she come down home yere 'cause her poor heart breakin' o' loneliness?" went on the boy fiercely. "Hain't she say to me, time an' again—'Oh, Chad, Chad, I cain't never see my folks agin, 'cause I hain't never treated 'em right. Now I jus' wanta die down South yere by de dear ol' home. Ol' mother, she say, stern an' proud, she doan' never wanta see me agin.'" Unconsciously the negro lad with his graphic power of imitation had caught the heartbreaking inflection of Aunt Nancy's voice. A silence fell over the old barn alive with pitiful ghosts.

"If Mis' Nancy doan' wanta see yoh," finished Chad doggedly, "yoh gotta go. I'se her protector an' cheerer-up." But something in the Major's face made Chad draw closer. And staring wistfully up into the kindly eyes, he ignored, Aunt Nancy's trembling gesture of rebuke.

"Mis' Nancy," he blurted with a great boyish sob, "I hain't goin' to shut up. He—he doan' mean nuthin' 'cept kindness. He got good eyes an'—an' he powahful hurt an' upset too. She—she hain't got money 'nuff to live good," he went on, "'cause Massa Frank Verney he use it up an'—an' run away an' las' year he come back sick an' die. An' de

money gone. An' she share all she got with me ever since she picked me out de gutter, a good fo' nuthin' pickaninny whut ol' Gran'pop always walloped when he had licker in him. An'—an' I cain't never do 'nuff foh her, 'cept jus' whistle an' dance an' dress up in dese yere Noah Ark duds when she sob an' cry 'bout de ol' times an' need cheerin' up—"

"Phoebe!" said the Major huskily, but the mouth below the lavender mask was proud and unrelenting for all it quivered.

Now in the silence there came the impatient rap-rap-rapping of a cane upon the walk and the voice of a terrible old lady muffled in a cloak.

"Edward," snapped Grandmother Verney tartly, thumping her stick upon the walk, "I've lost all patience with you. If you and Dick find Christmas kidnappings so absorbing, I don't. And why doesn't Uncle Noah come in and make the coffee?" She stared sharply in through the door at the Christmas tree. "What's all this?" she demanded. "Why are you all staring like a crowd of lunatics? And who is this absurd little negro yonder in plush knickerbockers and a claw-hammer coat. Lord save us, he's a sight!" and then her gaze fell suddenly upon the masked figure in the lavender brocade and she halted, staring like the rest.

And as Aunt Nancy Cary looked mutely into the eyes of this terrible old lady who had mothered her orphaned girlhood, the proud look about her mouth relaxed. Unheeded the lavender mask fluttered suddenly to the floor and with a great, heart-broken sob of homesickness and longing, Aunt Nancy fell forward upon her knees, wildly clutching Grandmother Verney's cloak where it trailed upon the door-sill.

"Mother Verney!" she choked, "Mother Verney—it—it is I—Phoebe!"

The stick fell heavily from Grandmother Verney's hand.

"Phoebe!" she muttered with a swift keen glance at her son, "Phoebe?" But the Major's white face was answer enough and Grandmother Verney, frowning, turned away from the imploring in his eyes. Still, for all her stern old face hardened and she bit her lips, a great tear splashed down upon her cloak.

The Major touched her shoulder.

"Mother," said he, "it is Christmas day. And Frank has gone to his eternal accounting."

There was an electric interval during which Grandmother Verney seized her stick and seemed about to rap her way back fiercely to the house—then her face flamed red. Trembling she bent and touched Aunt Nancy upon the shoulder.

"Phoebe!" she said abruptly, "get up or I'll be crying myself. It's Christmas day and we're all too old to quarrel." With a terrible rasp she cleared her throat. "Edward, Dick," she snorted indignantly, "stop staring and open the door. A barn's no place for heroics. And get Phoebe's cloak." She beat fiercely at Uncle Noah's turkey with her stick. "Infamous bird!" she boomed, venting her emotion upon Job, "stop gobbling. Uncle Noah, you'd better pick up your spectacles and quit staring or you'll step on them. And hurry in and make the coffee—it's nearly midnight."

Grimly Grandmother Verney waved the silent party from the barn and followed with a prodigious thump of her cane.

Uncle Noah picked up his spectacles.

"Humph!" said he shortly, "'pears like I hain't got much party left."

Which seemed to impress Chad considerably for his eyes were sympathetic. And suddenly with a preliminary handspring or so, he be-

thought himself of his gift of "cheering up" and straightway the barn was musical with the call of many birds. A strange, officious turkey gobbled threateningly at Job who bristled responsively—then with a muffled giggle, Chad thrust his fingers in his vest and swelled forth his chest.

"Uncle Noah," said he sonorously, "there is a gentleman here who accuses you of kidnaping his children!"

Scandalized Uncle Noah stared.

"Gawd-o-massy, Massa Dick," floated fluently from Chad's lips in an unmistakable quaver, "I hain't been kidnagin' no chillun. Fo' Gawd, sah, I hain't!"

The ragged coat-tails described a dizzy arc across the barn. The perpendicular result spoke with the wail of Mom Arduisi.

"Madonna mia, the poor bam-beanie, the poor bambeanie, no hava da Chris'mus day—no hava da Chris'mus day!" Chad rolled his eyes. "Toddy," he added sternly, "fold your ears in!"

Once more the coat-tails flirted their ragged way across the barn and Grandmother Verney's indignant boom demanded knowledge of the absurd little negro in plush knickers at which Uncle Noah seized the inverted cheerer-up by an indelicate segment of the said knickers and assisted him to unexpected perpendicularity.

"Yoh is a mos' powahful pert pickaninny," said he sternly, "mock-in' yo' elders. Now yoh jus' turn dem scitter-witterin' shanks toward de kitchen an' he'p make de coffee."

It was a radiant Christmas party to which Chad and Uncle Noah presently bore their steaming trays of coffee with Aunt Nancy, her wrinkled cheeks aglow, in a great chair by the fire and the Major bustling about the dying log with a poker. And if this Christmas log could

have told its story, it would have crackled forth tears and laughter, talk of the olden days and talk of Chad's faithful devotion to his mistress; it would have showered golden sparks of benediction upon kindly hearts too wise to withhold forgiveness—all in all a Christmas tale of readjustment punctuated with the impatient rapping of Grandmother Verney's cane.

Now as Uncle Noah lowered his tray to the library table, he was conscious of a sudden hush in the hum of reminiscence and looking up he saw that all eyes were full upon him. From his arm-chair by the table rose the Colonel with much the air of a general who has some monumental task upon his mind.

"Hum!" said he. "Hum! Bless my soul that's a most persistent frog in my throat to-night. Uncle Noah," he gently touched the old man's arm. "Er—what do you think of this absurd little darky here anyway?"

"Yoh—yoh mean Chad, sah?"

Uncle Noah glanced mildly over his spectacles at the ludicrous apparition at his elbow whose face was largely teeth and rolling eyeballs. "Well, sah," said he fairly, "he hain't so much on looks, Massa Dick, dat's a fact!—an' he's powahful loose and pert with his shanks an' his tongue—doan' 'pear to have no reverence foh nobuddy—but dere hain't no gittin' round it, Massa Dick, he mos' powahful smart! I don't ricomember ever seein' any such pickaninny afore."

"Smart and faithful!" nodded Aunt Nancy warmly and wiped her eyes. "Though to be sure when I need his heels the most, he's on his head."

The Colonel cleared his throat again and drew forth his handkerchief which, finding no use for—he replaced.

"It's most astonishing," he began,

"most astonishing. Aunt Nancy herself knew nothing at all about it until we put two and two together."

But the Colonel was getting nowhere in his conversational ramble; wherefore he cleared his throat once more and began afresh.

"Uncle Noah—er—what—what was your name—er—before"—with ready tact—"before you took the family name of Fairfax?"

"Benson, sah. My daddy—he born on de Benson place."

"Hum—Benson—to be sure, to be sure. Knew I was right—knew I was right of course. Amazing—most amazing! Uncle Noah, Chad here has a ridiculous stick-pin, I'm told, a white and yellow bead on a pin like a grain of corn—got it from his granddaddy—and Mrs. Verney—er—Miss Phoebe—er—" The Colonel coughed and floundered again.

"He's been calling me Mis' Nancy," corrected Aunt Nancy.

"And Mis' Nancy never dreamed of it until now when she told me, but I know you've got another such ridiculous old pin and Chad's name is Benson—and—and—Oh, God bless my soul, Dick, what a mess I'm making of this to be sure. Come here and help me."

Blue eyes kindly, Dick Fairfax joined his father.

"Uncle Noah," he said, "Dad's mixing things badly. The whole truth is just this. Years ago when your son ran away, it was at Frank Verney's bidding. Aunt Nancy remembers well how he wrote for him and to cover his dishonor likely in luring away another man's servant, he swore to her that the wild young colored lad who worshiped him so belonged to his father.

"Whut—whut yoh mean, Massa Dick?" whispered Uncle Noah, shakily touching Dick's arm, "Chad Benson—dat—dat were my boy Chad's name whut runned away."

"Exactly," nodded Dick. "And having patched a number of things together we feel sure that this ridiculous little devil here in the claw-hammer coat whose name is Chad Benson—is your great-grandson."

But Uncle Noah heard no more. The old library had vanished from his sight and he saw a moon bright above a field of cotton. There was a line of negro shacks. Somewhere faintly a banjo was playing, but Mammy Chloe was crying for Chad—for the runaway boy who had never come back. . . . And the darkies were singing a song of the old South, the dear old South that would come no more. Great tears welled swiftly up to the old negro's eyes and coursed heavily down his wrinkled cheeks. And with trembling hands upon his eyes—he swayed.

"Oh, Mammy Chloe," he whispered, "Mammy Chloe."

Dimly he was conscious that they were all gathering about him. Through the mist he caught the kindly eyes of young Massa Dick's pretty wife.

"Poor, poor old man!" said the girl and her wonderful gray eyes were like velvet. Then he felt the Colonel's hand upon his shoulder heavy with the affection his years of faithful service had inspired.

They were all talking of Chad—of a stick-pin—yes, Mammy Chloe had given one to her son and one to her husband years ago. . . . The sound of the strumming banjo was fainter . . . the moon above the cotton, the singing darkies but a memory.

"Married and drifted away from us," Aunt Nancy was saying, "and then he grew so wild and drank so much he was always in trouble. He kept coming to Frank for help or we would have lost track of him completely. And one day—a year or so before he died—I found him

beating Chad—he'd been drinking again—and I took the poor little fellow away and kept him."

"Brace up, Uncle Noah," exclaimed the remorseful Colonel, "I have made a mess of things."

The mist vanished. The old man stared up into the kindly circle of faces about him, his face working piteously.

"Massa Dick," he whispered, "yoh—yoh doan' mean I'se got blood kin—dat I hain't alone?"

"I mean," said the Colonel huskily, "I mean that Chad here is the grandson of your boy—Chad Benson."

"And we'll have to share him," put in Grandmother Verney. "He'll be near you right at Fernlands. But he's got to mend his ways"—with a rap of her cane—"he's got to mend his ways. Ridiculous monkey!"

Uncle Noah gulped courageously and wiped his glasses, whereupon the Colonel cleared his throat and promptly wiped his own.

"Poor Chad," said Uncle Noah, "poor, foolish lad. He done broke Mammy Chloe's heart. And he run away from de Colonel."

Now in the hush that followed, Chad 3rd suddenly inverted himself with a muffled whoop of celebration.

"Sho," said he, between inversions, "I gotta great-grandpop. Sho', hain't I glad! Sho'! I hain't never had a great-grandpop."

Uncle Noah straightened himself with a sudden air of authority. And when he spoke there was the dignity of kinship in his voice.

"Chad," he commanded in a terrible voice, taking refuge from his emotion in stern command after a fashion of the Colonel, "quit scitter-witterin' 'bout yere. I see yo' grandpop's gotta take yoh in hand. An' serve de Colonel's coffee."

The Yule log crackled. Rolling his eyes the Blackbird served the Christmas coffee.

THE TEN-THIRTY FOLKESTONE EXPRESS

BY SAX ROHMER

Author of "The Insidious Dr. Fu-Manchu"

[Additional interest is lent this story by the fact that the author, whose real name is Arthur Sarsfield Ward, wrote it expressly with a view to aiding the Belgian Relief Fund and other funds established for the assistance of those who must suffer from the war. All that the author receives from both the publication and motion-picture rights of the story will be devoted to this purpose.—EDITOR.]

I GLANCED at the clock on the mantelpiece and noted that one a.m. was already past. My work began to worry me, my brain was growing dull, and I decided that the article upon which I was engaged could not be finished that night as I had hoped.

My hand was actually upon the switch of the table-lamp, when a familiar whistle reached me from the roadway—two bars of an Oriental strain which bore my memory back to Cairo. That summons, so wholly unexpected, brought me to my feet in a trice; and, the household having long since retired, I ran to the door and opened it—to admit a ruddy-faced, clean-shaven man, whose well-cut tweed suit served to show off his spare but athletic figure, and whose blue eyes shone the more brightly from contrast with the sunburnt skin.

"Rider!" I cried—and gripped his extended hand.

"Rider, it is!" he said, with the odd, one-sided smile which I knew.

I drew him back to the study, seated him in the armchair, and brought out whisky, siphon, and cigars, with a celerity which only reflected the delight occasioned by his arrival.

Rider helped himself liberally, without apology, his unhandsome countenance revealing keen appreciation of my hospitality.

"My dear man!" I cried, "it is sheer luck that you did not find me in bed and asleep!"

"We are brother owls," he replied, the blue eyes twinkling. "I gambled on finding you up, and my plunge was justified."

How good it was to hear his drawling voice again. Ours was a true, if peculiar friendship. To the confusion of those who claim that our secret service is conducted by glorified constables, I advance the instance of my friend, Rider. "Rider Pasha" they called him in Egypt, and, although he was a popular member of both the Cairo clubs, I could swear that not another member knew the exact nature of his duties, his official position, or true sphere of activity. Furthermore, I am ignorant of these matters to this day. Yet I knew and have evidence to prove, that Rider Pasha is a secret service agent—a higher detective. As one of his most intimate friends, I can add that I have not the remotest idea to which Government department he is really attached.

"I didn't know you had left Cairo," I said, watching him as he smoked and drank with that appearance of satisfaction peculiarly Rider's own.

"My good chap," he replied, "I have been in Cape Town, in Rangoon, in Hong-Kong, in St. Peters-

burg, and in Paris, since you last saw me at the Turf Club in Cairo!"

"And now?"

"Now, as you see, I am in London."

"And the business?"

"The business, my boy, at the moment, is murder."

"Murder!"

"You have based some ripping yarns upon former inquiries of mine, and, incidentally, have brought your powerful, if undisciplined imagination, usefully to bear upon the business side of certain cases; I invite your co-operation once more; because—A—" (He ticked off the point on his finger) "the present case is one wherein I rank your views above those of a constable; and—B—" (He raised a second finger) "it is a mystery which I feel sure, suitably disguised, will make excellent copy."

"You spoke of murder—"

"Murders, you were about to say, are outside my province?"

"This particular one—"

"I have a cab at the corner, and I am about to ask you to come and see the body!"

"The body! What! now?"

"At this very moment! Are you coming?"

Undoubtedly I was going; for a case in which Rider was concerned must necessarily be of exceptional interest. Ignorant as I was of his real official position, I knew, or had divined, that he was no ordinary detective. This murder of which he spoke must therefore possess a political interest.

Three minutes later we were in the cab, which waited at the corner, and were speeding I knew not where, for Rider had merely given the direction: "Back again."

Our course, then, lay southward, in a line, roughly, following the railroad. It took us through the more desirable suburbs into a network of

slummy streets. At the end of one of these, occupied by a long block of dwellings bearing the title "Morley's Buildings," we stopped.

"It is the third house," said Rider, taking my arm and pointing. "You see the light shining from the window there?"

I glanced up at the window indicated—it was otherwise no different from those adjoining it—and noted that a light showed through the dingy blind.

"We do not enter the house," continued my companion, "but we proceed to the corner."

This we did; and the block proved to terminate upon a stretch of waste land. That is to say, there was a gap, with some kind of factory rising dimly beyond, and on the right through the gap a dismal patch, a hundred yards or more in extent, with the telegraph poles and network of wires bounding it which showed that a railway embankment ran parallel with Morley's Buildings.

Rounding the angle of the end house, Rider and I stumbled through the rank weeds for some fifty or sixty yards. A light flashed suddenly in my face; a constable was directing his lantern upon me.

"All right, officer!" said Rider.

The constable raised his hand in salute.

"Nothing suspicious?"

"Nothing sir."

"Look!" said Rider. Then:—"Shine your lantern on him, constable."

As Rider pulled my arm I looked down into the tangled mass of weeds and grasses.

A man was there, almost at my feet—a man who wore rough and ragged clothes and who lay, or rather half knelt, with his elbows dug into the soil and his head lowered grotesquely so that his face was hidden. He seemed to be crouching, as if for

a catlike spring. But the back of his skull showed, in the light of the bull's-eye, as one ghastly wound—a blurr of blood-matted hair and shattered bone, difficult adequately to describe, frightful to remember, impossible to forget.

"Dead!"

"Over an hour, sir."

It was the constable who had answered me.

"About twelve o'clock, then?"

"According to the doctor," said Rider, grimly, "yes. His wife found him."

Momentarily I was too horrified to speak. Then:—

"Who is he?" I asked huskily.

"He is, or was," answered Rider, "one Dan Wiley; something of an undesirable, but none the less, poor devil!"

"And he lived?"

"At number 3, where you saw the light in the window. His wife is up there. I pity her."

"He was drunk, sir—" began the constable—

"Yes," interrupted Rider; "he reeks of drink now, but—" he pointed significantly—"it was not drink that killed him."

Another silence; then:—

"What are the particulars?" I asked, and began to move away.

"Don't go yet!" snapped Rider, taking my arm. "I want to ask you if you notice anything peculiar—"

"In what way?"

"Just study the scene; I won't prejudice your views; but just take in all the details whilst I tell you what I know."

A sense of nausea was assailing me; but I repelled it and sought to do as Rider directed. Meanwhile he continued:—

"Dan Wiley was a ne'er-do-well, and one of the most dissolute characters of a dissolute neighborhood. He had no regular work, and was rarely

sober. He lived with his wife at number 3 Morley's Buildings. I fancy that the poor woman contributed more largely to the upkeep of the establishment than did the departed. It was his almost nightly custom to get obstreperously drunk at the King's Head in Grenville Street, some little distance off on the other side of the line. On leaving, or being ejected, he would take a short cut home by scrambling over the fence, crossing the railway line, and thence going through this waste patch upon which he was found to-night.

"Sometimes he would fall asleep on the way, but never—so strangely does Providence protect the drunkard—upon the line! On several occasions, however, he has been found asleep on the intervening stretch of waste ground upon which to-night—it was no unusual adventure, poor creature—Mrs. Wiley came out about twelve o'clock to search for her husband. She found him as you see."

"Had there been any quarrel at the public house?"

"None at all. He was only moderately drunk when he left the bar for home, and nothing of an unusual nature had occurred, although he was naturally a quarrelsome man."

"But he is not facing towards—"

"Towards home?" snapped Rider, tensely. "Right! I am glad you noted it. It was the first thing that struck my attention."

"Someone attacked him from behind."

"Someone who came, not from the railway line, but from the direction of Morley's Buildings? Exactly!"

"You have inquired?"—

"I have made such inquiries as were possible without exciting undue suspicion. Do you note anything else of a peculiar nature?"

I shook my head. The brutal and revolting crime sickened me; and I was incapable of considering coolly

the circumstances attendant upon it.

"Then we will just have a look around number 3," said Rider, "and afterward, if nothing strikes you, you have my leave to return home."

"Thanks!" I said, ironically. "This is scarcely the sort of case, Rider—"

"Don't be too sure," he interrupted. "It looks a brutally unimaginative affair, I grant you; sordid it is, I admit. But although—and frankly I am disappointed—you have overlooked them, there are points about it which place the crime in a class quite by itself."

I said no more, until, in answer to my friend's knock, a rather slatternly woman, whose plain face was rendered yet less attractive by eyes red with weeping, opened the door. She offered us no greeting, but turned, in a pathetically aloof manner, and walked up the uncarpeted stairs ahead of us.

Rider took my arm again.

"You note the door upon the right?" he whispered. "It communicates with a sort of ground-floor—actually the basement. There are three steps down, and two rooms below. The front one is only a foot or so below the level of the street, the back one is virtually a cellar. One window, high in the wall, looks out upon the waste ground and the railway. The Wileys leased the house, but they only occupied the top floor. The middle floor is vacant and the ground floor, to which I have referred, is rented by one Zahdoff, a cabinet-maker. I have seen Zahdoff; he had merely a nodding acquaintance with his landlord—Dan Wiley; and his limited English vocabulary does not admit of a protracted conversation."

"He is a foreigner?"

"A Polish-Jew, according to his own account."

We mounted the stairs to the top floor; a miserable abode it was.

"You see," said Rider, quietly, "it is typical enough of its kind. The poor woman does charring, and her husband used to drink the proceeds. There is nothing much to learn here. Do you think so?"

I shook my head; and Rider, with a few kindly words to the unhappy woman, who sat in the one practicable chair, staring before her with unseeing eyes, descended the stairs with me.

"The neighborhood knows nothing of the matter as yet," he told me. "We have succeeded in keeping it quiet. But I must make arrangements for the removal of the body to the mortuary."

In the street he stood facing me for a moment.

"I won't ask you to worry about it, to-night," he said: "but in the morning, get all the facts in line, and jot down your impressions. Oh! I am not joking; you have the type of mind which, not being confined in certain grooves, such as mine is, can frequently cast light into dark places. Jot down your impressions; I am most anxious to have them. The cab is waiting at the corner, and is at your service."

II

I cannot say that I slept well, on my return; for the vision of that splintered skull persistently haunted me. Yet no occasion arose to jot down impressions as Rider had requested, for saving that blood mist of sordid brutality which hung over the affair, there was nothing, so far as I could perceive, in the nature of a clue; there was nothing showing this ghastly crime to be a link in a chain, to be a move in some wider campaign such as would call for the services of Rider Pasha.

Towards dawn, sleep still defying me, I had an idea to which my mind obstinately clung; in short, it oc-

curred to me that Rider, or those who instructed him, must know something of the antecedents of the man Wiley which gave him a certain importance not perceptible to me.

Before I had finished breakfast, Rider appeared carrying a tremendous bundle of newspapers. He waved to me in his airy fashion to continue my meal, and throwing himself into an armchair, began rapidly to scan the columns of the journals.

He quite ignored my remarks until this task was accomplished; then, dropping down the final sheet upon the mound already littered at his feet, he turned to me.

"There was barely time," he said, "to arrange for the suppression of the news, and I feared that it might have found its way into print despite my activities. It has not, however."

"You attach a singular importance to the murder of the man Wiley?"

"Then you are still in the dark?"

"To me it has the appearance of a typical slum crime."

"And you may be right. But yet—there are points . . ."

"I have quite failed to detect them."

"Consider the circumstances: What could be the object of such a crime? Who could profit by it?"

"It is mysterious, certainly."

Rider leant against the mantelpiece, both hands deep in his pockets, and his jaw thrust forward truculently.

"It is!" he snapped.

He stared at me vaguely for some time in silence; then:—

"I want you to come along to-night," he said, "and go over the ground once again with me."

"Why at night?"

"Because, assuming the murderer to reside in the locality—and one may fairly assume so much—I do not wish him to observe us."

A while longer Rider remained, talking of matters purely personal; then, arranging to meet me at a point near to Morley's Buildings, at ten o'clock that night, he left me to my work—which progressed none the more favorably by reason of his visit and the disturbing ideas which it had engendered.

The place which Rider had selected for the rendezvous was a certain tavern, bearing the sign of the Two Feathers. I must explain that I was no stranger to this type of nocturnal adventure; and my costume, when, a few minutes before the appointed hour, I entered the private bar of this establishment, was not of a fashion which I should have chosen for a business visit to Fleet Street.

Rider—an expert—has assured me that I make an excellent loafer; and when on the stroke of the hour my companion joined me in the bar, I was forced to concede that a more undesirable looking ruffian I had never encountered.

Picture us, then, as, typical of Morley's Buildings, we slouched across the open ground behind those unsavory tenements in the direction of the railway line.

A certain sordid activity was noticeable in the street at this comparatively early hour. Many dirty children still continued their play in the gutters beneath a fire of shrewish screams from bedraggled mothers. Lights showed in many of the windows, and practically all the front doors were open.

We were already upon our way to the scene of the crime, when Rider, suddenly tackling me in Rugby fashion, threw me heavily to the ground, and, prostrate upon my body, held me there!

"Not a word!" he hissed in my ear. He loses his drawling speech in moments of action. "I don't think she has seen us!"

I succeeded in raising my head. A vague and shapeless, muffled figure was approaching from the railroad, and must pass close to the spot where we lay amid the tangled vegetation.

Rider's nervous excitement communicating itself to me, I crouched, scarcely breathing, whilst the figure came nearer and nearer, drew level with our hiding-place, and passed on.

It was that of a woman, poorly dressed, and having a furtiveness of manner very singular and noticeable. A vague light had shone upon her face as she passed me; and since this was a strangely dark night, I craned my neck to ascertain from whence the light had come. Instantly I perceived that we lay just without the radius of this faint illumination—which proceeded from a little window partially masked with tangled weeds in one of the houses of Morley's Buildings.

"The basement window of number 3!" whispered Rider—"watch!"

Indeed I was watching to the best of my ability; for vague as the light had been which had illuminated the face of the furtive woman, nevertheless it had served to show me that her clothes were as false a clue to real identity as were our own.

She was very dark and had a pale and distinguished beauty, with large flashing eyes, and a type of clear-cut features which for some reason set me thinking of Vienna. And my imagination was still straying through the brilliantly lighted streets of the Austrian capital, when the mysterious woman gained the window, stooped, and evidently entered into conversation with one who stood in the room within.

"Zahdoff!" whispered Rider in my ear. "Did you see her face?"

"I did," I replied. "She has beauty, of a dark sort—"

"White complexion, with strangely black eyes?"

"Yes."

"From where I lay, I could not see her, unfortunately." His voice spoke of excitement restrained with difficulty. "But, by God! I believe I'm right!" he added, strangely.

"What do you suspect?"

"Impossible to go into that now. Surely even you will admit that this incident lifts the case above the sordid level to which you had assigned it?"

"It is very mysterious—certainly."

"Quiet!" whispered Rider. "See! she is going!"

Indeed, as he spoke, a figure in black silhouette moved across the window and was lost in the shadows of the buildings. Then for a moment it reappeared at the corner—and was lost again.

"Is *he* looking from the window, now?" hissed Rider.

"No," I reported.

"Then come on!"

My companion leapt to his feet, and stood, clutching my arm.

Faintly, in the distance, I heard the drone of a starting motor engine.

"Too late!" he muttered. "Let's see what we can find here," and went on some dozen paces to the spot where Dan Wiley had been found.

"Stand between me and the buildings," he directed.

I did as he desired, and he, kneeling amid the tangled growths, directed the ray of a pocket-lamp upon the ground all about.

"Keep your eye on the window!"

I was watching the window intently, and, even as he spoke, a shaggy head appeared thereat, sharply outlined by the light in the room behind it.

"Ss!"

Rider extinguished the lamp as I dropped on my knees beside him. We both turned and looked back at Morley's Buildings.

A man in the basement of number

3 was staring out intently across the patch of waste ground.

"Do you think he saw the light?" whispered Rider.

"Impossible to say, but I think not."

"I hope not," snapped my friend, "for if he did—"

"Well?"

"I am gradually collecting the threads, I think; and unless I am greatly mistaken, we have to deal with one of the cleverest rogues in Europe!"

"But surely you know—"

"I have never set eyes upon his face; his real face, I mean. Few have. He has a reputation—! If I can round him up, it may mean the difference between—"

He paused.

"Between?"

"I must not say too much," added Rider, "more especially as I may be wrong; but—"

The figure vanished from the window, and—

"Come on!" snapped my friend, seizing my arm.

We hastened across to the corner of the buildings and again adopting the slouching gait fashionable in that vicinity, passed along by the houses. The door of number 3 was closed, but from the grated window at our feet, a faint light shone up.

"The worthy cabinet-maker," said Rider, "works late."

Half an hour afterwards we were both seated in my study, and Rider was addressing himself to the whisky and soda with that air of joyous satisfaction peculiarly his own. For my part, although, now, I divined that the murder of Dan Wiley was no common crime, I was completely mystified at all points. The cabinet-making of Zahdoff clearly was but a mask to other more deadly operations. But who *was* Zahdoff? If Rider knew that the man had a crim-

inal history, why was Zahdoff not arrested? Who was the woman with the remarkable eyes? What part did she play in the drama? I scarcely knew where to begin my inquiries; but—

"What do you know of the man called Zahdoff?" I asked abruptly, pushing a box of cigarettes towards Rider.

He glanced up with his odd smile.

"Unfortunately," he replied, "I know nothing; I merely suspect. There is a certain individual of international notoriety who might—it is conceivable—be hidden beneath the bearded Zahdoff. In certain quarters it has been suspected for some time that this individual, whom we will dignify by the title of Colonel X, was concealed in London. I may even go so far as to state that I came to London expressly to look for him! The death of Dan Wiley presented certain curious features which induced me to glance in that direction. In this way I made the acquaintance of Zahdoff, Polish-Jew and cabinet-maker. He interested me, although I flatter myself that I did not display this interest; but there was not the slightest ground of suspicion; I hadn't a scrap of evidence to connect Zahdoff with the murder, and I hadn't a scrap of evidence to connect Zahdoff with Colonel X. But I have certain instincts or intuitions. Pursuing these random ideas, I blundered upon my first real clue—not necessarily to the murderer of Wiley, but to the identity of Zahdoff with Colonel X!"

"Who is Colonel X?"

"Let us say for the moment that he is head of a gang of international criminals. Although, as I have already mentioned, the appearance of the real Colonel is quite unknown to the secret service men throughout Europe—a tribute to his protean genius—he has been traced on more

than one occasion and identified, by reason of his association with a certain woman"

"Madame X?"

Rider shrugged his shoulders and lighted a cigarette.

"Suppose we give her the benefit of the doubt?" he said, smiling. "At any rate she has been less successful in disguising herself than has the Colonel. She is a woman of considerable beauty, though of a distinctly vampirish sort; a dull white complexion with very dark eyes and very red lips—you know the type?"

"It was she!" I cried, excitedly.

"I am disposed to agree with you."

"Then Zahdoff—"

"Is Colonel X? Again, I think so."

"And Wiley?"

"Wiley is a stumbling block; I cannot disguise that fact. As I have told you, I blundered upon this den of the cabinet-maker—sheerly blundered upon it. I do not claim that in the murder of Dan Wiley I perceived a clue to the whereabouts of the man for whom I was searching; I looked into the case merely because I was on the spot at the time, and because it presented unusual features. If I have found my man, it is more by good luck than by good management."

I crossed the room to where the siphon stood upon the side-table, and, squirting soda into my tumbler, threw to Rider the query:—

"You have spoken several times of these unusual features. What are they?"

"Since your imagination would appear to have lost something of its fertility, they are these:—The entire absence of any motive, and the position of the victim's body."

"He was practically kneeling."

"I am convinced that he was *actually* kneeling at the time that his assailant came upon him from behind.

He was kneeling with his head lowered to the ground."

"Well?"

Again Rider shrugged his shoulders.

"I do not know *why* he was in that attitude," he confessed, "but I am determined to find out. Since the *motive* is at present lacking in the scheme, I take it that he was murdered *because* he was kneeling in that way!"

"What?"

"It seems absurd, I know; but I feel that the clue to the labyrinth is dangling before our eyes."

There was a silence of some minutes.

"What steps are you taking?"

"I am arranging to watch Zahdoff."

"Why did you not follow the woman to-night?"

"Because I had not provided against the possibility of having to do so."

"What do you mean?"

"She had a cab or a car waiting in the locality. I heard it drive off. How could I hope to follow?"

"True," I said. "What is the nature of the arrangements you have made?"

"I have leased the vacant floor of number 3," replied Rider; "and some time to-morrow, whilst Zahdoff is absent, for he goes out to purchase certain necessary provisions daily, I shall cut an opening in the boards at a point immediately above the tall cupboard which I noticed in his room, and make a spy-hole in the very dilapidated plaster of his ceiling. It is even possible that some of the existing holes will serve my purpose."

"Can I assist you in any way?" I asked eagerly.

"I am relying upon you," replied Rider. "For my own part I might be called away at any time; I should

then look to you to keep watch on our friend until my return. In order to provide against that emergency, I have given out that I have leased the room for myself and my brother and that we are both very irregular characters! A few necessary items of furniture are being installed, and here are your keys!"

Gravely he handed me two door keys, then, screwing his face into that odd smile of his, lighted a second cigarette.

He left at eleven o'clock to return to his temporary chambers, and to resume more decent raiment. About midday, on the morrow it was that I next heard from him. He rang me up.

"My precautions were taken only just in time," he said, "I have my orders for Budapest, and am now off to catch the train! I look to you, brother owl, to devote several evenings during the coming week to the spy-hole at number 3 Morley's Buildings. Oh! I've made it—yes! It has just occurred to me that the real activities of Zahdoff probably do not commence until the neighborhood is sleeping. You understand what I mean?"

"Quite well," I replied, grimly. "I must sleep during the day if I am to remain up half the night!"

"I will communicate with you at the earliest possible moment. Make notes of anything which you may observe; and don't forget to lock the room door when you leave. To spur you to enthusiasm, I may add that if Zahdoff is actually identical with Colonel X, his activities are inimical, not merely to individuals, but to the future of the British Empire!"

III

That night I took possession of my apartments in Morley's Buildings. At an hour when the dirty children and their bedraggled watch-

ers had already departed from the gutter-way, I inserted the key in the lock and stepped into the stuffy little passage with its mingled odor of fried bacon and lamp oil. It was perfectly dark as I entered, but at the sound of my footsteps the depressed door on the right opened, and the figure of Zahdoff, the cabinet-maker, was blackly indicated against the light from the room behind him.

Of his height I was unable to judge, since he stood considerably below me, but he possessed a great breadth of shoulder, and with his shaggy hair and bushy whiskers, presented a striking silhouette, markedly leonine in character.

He muttered something which may have been a greeting, to which I responded with a gruff "good-night"—and passed up the stairs.

As I mounted, Zahdoff reclosed his door, and in utter darkness I had to grope my way to the upper apartments. The door communicating with the front room was locked, in which I recognized a precaution of Rider's, since one had to pass through this front room in order to reach that at the back, the real scene of operations.

I lighted a match and surveyed my demesne. The "furniture" to which Rider had referred, consisted of a deal table and two chairs! Entering the second room, I observed a carpet upon the floor, and a pallet bed over by the window. A small rickety table, bearing a common brass lamp, completed the "appointments" of my chambers. I was unaware of Mrs. Wiley's position in the matter; I did not know whether she was our accomplice, or whether she believed me to be a bona fide lodger. Rider had neglected to advise me on this point, and I determined to take no undue risks in regard to my landlady.

Having lowered the dirty linen blind, I rolled up a corner of the carpet and began to search for the spy-hole. Since I had never been in Zahdoff's apartments, I did not know upon which side of the room, beneath, the cupboard referred to by Rider was situated; therefore I searched two sides of my floor in vain, but finally I found a section of boarding neatly cut out and readily detachable by means of a little brass screw which had been placed in it for the purpose. I was diplomatic enough to know that to commence operations immediately would be unwise, and I did not even remove the board; in fact I replaced the carpet over it—just as a loud rap sounded at my door!

Lamp in hand, I crossed the front room and threw open the door.

The light shone upon the pale, bearded face of Zahdoff; and a singular face it was—large featured and lined with innumerable furrows. Pale blue eyes he had, seeming abnormally large behind the pebbles of his spectacles, and a high, broad brow; this sufficiently singular countenance was crowned, surrounded, and, as regards the mouth and jaw, masked, by such a riot of reddish-brown hair as I had rarely seen upon any human being.

A moment he confronted me, so; then:—

"It is Mr. Grimes?" he said, speaking thickly and with a strong accent—"that comes to live here?"

"That's me!" I replied in my broadest Cockney.

"I am glad to know my neighbors," continued Zahdoff, and held out an angular and sinewy hand.

I grasped it with my own, which was artificially dirtied, and wondered what this visit might portend. In the next instant its object stood revealed. From a capacious pocket Zahdoff took out a blind-roller.

"You will find that your blind," he explained, thickly, "it is broken—no good. I come to fix you a new one."

Not an instant did I hesitate.

"Right oh! my old buck!" I cried, slapping him boisterously on the shoulder—"get on with it!"

I stood aside for him to enter, and this he did with alacrity. But little more he had to say for himself, whilst, with deft fingers, he took down the old roller (which appeared to me to be in perfect working order) and substituted the new one. I busied myself in the outer room, giving Zahdoff every opportunity to inspect the inner one—for which purpose, I doubted not, he was come. I had taken the precaution, however, of placing the rickety table directly over the spy-hole, with the lamp upon it!

His act of disinterested kindness performed, Zahdoff retired, casting a final keen glance about ere he did so. I had sufficient confidence in my make-up and acting to believe that he had accomplished nothing by his visit. Shortly afterwards, a great noise of carpentry arose from below, and this continued until long after midnight—when it ceased abruptly. I had locked my outer door and extinguished the lamp. Now I began, cautiously, to raise the blind of the back window; and, as I did so, the roller supplied by Zahdoff emitted a formidable squeak.

With my hand upon the cord, I stopped. Was this squeaking roller installed with design?

I had raised the blind no more than three or four inches, and I determined that my best course would be to raise it fully, let it squeak as loudly as it might; for if I desisted on the first squeak, it would show that I had hoped to act secretly; and it might be that this was the purpose of the contrivance.

Amid a perfect wailing, I fully

raised the blind. Peering down upon the waste ground, I was in time to see a muffled figure gliding into the shadows of the building.

That my first vigil was rewarded, I ascribed, at the time, to the success of my manoeuvres; I am disposed to believe now that Zahdoff's activity was dictated by an imperious need for haste. Lying prone upon the floor, then, with my head thrust tortoise-wise through the opening and my eye but a few inches removed from a rent in the plaster below, I viewed the workshop of Zahdoff that night, and I saw strange things.

As was to be expected, a quantity of timber lay about upon the floor or was piled against the wall. The cupboard, over the top of which I looked, was open; and when first I began my spying, the room below was empty—silent.

Then, *out from the cupboard*, came Zahdoff bearing a basket, evidently heavy. Its contents I was unable to perceive. But if his appearance from the cupboard had surprised me, his next movement was even more mysterious. He lifted the basket on to the ledge of the window, and someone—someone who must have stood outside on the waste ground—received it from him. It vanished . . . and Zahdoff, shouldering a heavy piece of timber, re-entered the cupboard. Silence followed.

Where was he?

Cautiously I stood upright. Zahdoff's cupboard was set in that side of the building backing upon the waste patch; the window also was on this side—as has already been noted—and to the left of the cupboard. I crept to the window and looked out.

This was a moonless night, during the brief heat-wave which visited us in the memorable summer of 1914; but under the blaze of the stars, I

saw a vaguely outlined figure returning from the direction of the railway embankment with the basket—now evidently empty! I watched until the bearer of the basket passed in below my window.

It was a woman.

When I returned to the spy-hole—Zahdoff reappeared, dragging a second basket. Tantalizingly enough, although I could see Zahdoff and at times see the basket, I could not, strain as I might, obtain a view of its contents. These mysterious operations, then, I watched far into the night. My weariness, and a certain quality in the atmosphere, warned me that dawn was nigh, when the baskets made their final journey, the woman disappeared, and Zahdoff extinguished the light in his work-shop.

I left the house about five o'clock, locking my door behind me.

On returning home, I slept until late in the morning. A telegraphic message was delivered at midday. It had been tendered in Paris, and read as follows:—

"Dan W. may have been listening. Listening." (The word was repeated.) "Wish had perceived this sooner. Search for earth newly turned upon waste ground and embankment. Observe greatest caution. Importance of W.'s case increasing hourly. Expect return any moment. "Rider."

IV

Ensued those dreadful days of suspense—of waiting from hour to hour, almost from minute to minute, for the words of the War Minister which should penetrate to every corner of the civilized world; which should advise the Powers, some to their consternation, others to their gladness, that the sword of Great Britain was unsheathed.

So wholly had I succumbed to the oppression of those anxious hours

that the mission entrusted to me by Rider was, I regret to say, temporarily neglected. Three times, now, I had sought my apartments in Morley's Buildings; on each occasion Zahdoff had greeted my entry in truly neighborly fashion; and upon three nights I had watched the pseudo cabinet-maker bearing timber into his cupboard and bearing laden baskets out. I had gone so far, whilst the detective zeal was upon me, as to search the waste ground between the houses and the railroad one morning whilst the occupant of the ground floor was absent. To my notes, bearing upon the murder mystery, I had added, as result, this item:—

"Great quantities of stone, clay, and newly turned soil, have been recently deposited upon the railway embankment behind Morley's Buildings."

Obtuse I must have been at this time; for I frankly confess that up to the moment of the declaration of war I had failed to associate my new discovery with the baskets which nightly came forth from Zahdoff's cupboard, and which were passed through his window to be received by the woman who waited!

Incredible it may appear, but that I may eat of the bread of humility, I confess it.

Swayed by the common excitement which had all England in its grip, I had relegated my amateur detective exploits to the limbo of things forgotten; when one evening some time after Britain's position in the Great Struggle had clearly been defined, I found myself a unit of the crowd thronging Downing Street . . . and I found myself face to face with the woman of Morley's Buildings—the woman whom Rider had suspected of being Madame X!

She was in a nervous hurry, and was very elegantly dressed, so that her really remarkable beauty excited

comment on all sides. But she thrust her way resolutely through the crowd and seemed bent upon gaining the end of the street.

Some momentous idea struggled for admission to my brain; and, whilst yet unable to embrace it, I, in turn, forced my way through the throng and followed that conspicuous figure.

I was only in time to see her being driven off in a large and opulently appointed car.

A new turn had been given to my ideas and an hour later I was seated at my study table with my notes opened before me. The nebulous was becoming substantial. If I had been excited before, I was trebly excited now.

Where was Rider? If these new ideas were well-founded, why was he not in London?

Suddenly it came home to me like a thunder-clap, that mighty issues were concerned. It appeared, nightmare fashion, that the structure of the British Empire rested upon my shoulders; so that, mentally and physically, I tottered and grew sick with dread.

My notes before me, I sat, longing ardently for my 'phone bell to ring, or for that familiar whistle to sound from the street.

But the bell did not ring, nor did I hear the whistle.

Ten minutes earlier, a company of Territorials had tramped past, visualizing England's readiness. Full well I knew that Civilization's self tottered upon the brink of an abyss. Already the news had leaked out that a British Expeditionary Force, for the first time since the dread shadow of Napoleon lay across Europe, had landed on the Continent. As a pressman, I knew more of the fact than could be available to the general public; and I knew that the peace of Europe veritably might depend upon

the action, not of a field army or an army corps, not of a regiment or a garrison, but upon the action of a single man.

Now I perceived, and perceived with horror, by this process of elimination, that that man might well be—*myself!*

The 'phone bell rang.

With a hand not too steady, I snatched up the receiver—I heard Rider's voice.

"Quick!" he snapped, "I am at Charing Cross. You have been watching Zahdoff?"

"I have!" I cried.

"Particulars! Omit nothing. But be brief."

I spread my notes under my hand and commenced to read through them from the time that I had first entered upon my campaign of espionage. My very soul shuddered when I contemplated what my recent neglect might mean!

Rider never once interrupted me, save by—"yes, go on!" I had almost reached the end of my notes, and I was just explaining how I had found the clay and newly turned earth on the railway embankment, when, upon the drawn casement curtain before me, I perceived a shadow!

My windows were fully opened, and by the light of the street lamp at the end of the front lawn, this shadow was clearly perceptible—for a moment only, but long enough to show me that the shadow was that of a woman—who had fled.

How long had she been crouching outside my open window? Who was she? I could not doubt!

"Go on, go on!" cried Rider—"why do you stop?"

In a great gush of words, I told him. Then:—

"Join me at H— Station!" he directed tersely. "I shall be waiting with a car . . ."

It was in a frame of mind unreal,

dreamlike, that I performed the journey to meet Rider. The streets through which I passed were dream-streets; the lights, the groups about the paper-shops, the unusual number of khaki coats amid the throng—all were phantoms. I seemed not to belong to this world about me. I was aloof from it, detached; a creature apart, marked out from my fellow men by a mighty responsibility which Fate had cast upon me.

At the station Rider waited, standing beside a powerful touring-car. A Territorial was on guard at the foot of the stairs, a curious group surveying him wonderingly.

"In!" snapped Rider—tossed half a crown to the man who had driven me, and literally dragged me into the car.

The chauffeur started so suddenly as to jerk me back upon the seat. Clearly, he had his orders; and a glance at Rider's face confirmed, if confirmation were necessary, the awful seriousness of our mission that night.

A sort of dusky pallor showed itself through the tan of his skin and his eyes were more nearly gray than blue, widely opened, set, and alight with an expression which I can only describe as one of deliberate ferocity. His fingers as he gripped my arm closed upon it like a steel vise.

"I was detained," he began, rapidly. "These last two weeks have been hell for me! . . . Then, suddenly, with a thousand difficulties to overcome before I could return, I saw that my post was here, in London. God! what I have done to get back! Some day I will tell you . . . On the way I have pictured everything that you told me just now. I saw what a fool I had been, I saw what it all meant; everything—everything—down to the tiniest item, fitted into the fiendish scheme!" . . .

"Wiley—"

"He fell asleep there—on the waste ground. He was awakened by the sounds beneath him—"

"Beneath him!"

"Damn it, man, damn it! You surely understand? He heard them cutting the *tunnel* below! In his semi-drunken state, some cry escaped him. Then *they* heard *him*! . . . Whilst he still lay, listening for further sounds, Zahdoff returned to his cellar, selected a heavy piece of timber, and crept around behind Wiley. There was no time for half measures. He knew, to within a day or two, at any rate, when he had to be ready; he dashed Wiley's brains out—"

"Then Zahdoff—"

"Is Dr. von Kotter, the cleverest and most unscrupulous spy in Europe! German War Office . . ."

Rider spoke the words disconnectedly, all the time gripping my arm with those steely fingers.

"Why, in heaven's name, was I so blind?" he cried. "A search of von Kotter's room would have revealed the whole accursed plot! Now!"

He pulled out his watch.

"Merciful God!"—the words were barely audible—"only ten minutes!"

The car pulled up with a jerk. Rider threw himself out, dragging me after him. I found myself at the corner of a mean street which I remembered to have passed before in my journeys to Morley's Buildings. Similarly to the latter, it lay parallel with the railway line, but at a rather more northerly point. Rider went racing along it madly, and I followed him. Those grouped about the open doors of the houses stared at us in stupid wonderment; but straight on went my companion, turned to the right, down a narrow courtway, and was out upon a continuation of that belt of waste land which, five hundred yards lower down the line, I knew so well.

A signal-box loomed directly

above us. In the light from its windows, Rider consulted his watch.

"Ten - forty - four!" he hissed, breathlessly. "Five minutes!"

Then with a bound he was up on the embankment and scrambling for the ladder of the box!

"Halt!"

There was a sentry on duty by the signal-box; Rider had been almost beside him ere he was perceived! Now the man stood with his bayonet but a few inches removed from Rider's chest!

I have never seen such an expression as that which crossed my friend's face: anger and horror mingled in it strangely.

"It is life or death!" he almost screamed at the man. "I am on secret service business here! You understand?" He thrust out a card.

"Halt! you cannot pass!"

"God in heaven! this is awful—I shall go mad! I tell you I *must* enter that box . . ."

There sounded the distant clang of metal. A groan burst from Rider's lips.

"The signalman has cleared the line!" I heard.

But the bayonet never moved. The man was a private in a London Territorial regiment, and clearly he was doubtful respecting his duty in such a situation. I think he perceived that Rider was in deadly earnest; yet I could not reproach him. He had his orders, and, up to a point, he adhered to them.

"Come on!" shouted Rider—"there is one other chance!"

"Halt!" The sentry stepped in front of my wild-eyed friend. "You cannot move. I must arrest you both and hand you over to the guard!"

Then, in that unlikely spot, a blow was struck and a martyr made for England.

Rider, with a serpentine movement, twisted under the threatening

bayonet and delivered the sentry a left-handed blow placed with deadly accuracy upon the jaw! The man pitched forward like a pole-axed bullock and without a cry rolled heavily down the embankment and lay at my feet.

Like a deer, Rider made off, and, with my heart thumping fiercely, I followed. We covered the five hundred yards to Morley's Buildings as one traverses the ground of dream-land. There was no light in Zahdoff's window. Around an angle of the building raced Rider, and into the street. At the door of number 3: "The key!" he panted.

I thrust the key into his hand, and in a moment he had the door open. Zahdoff's door was closed. Rider threw himself upon it. It was locked!

"Stand back!" he rasped, huskily.

I stood back against the wall, as, pulling a Browning pistol from his hip pocket, he blew out the lock! There was a crash as he kicked the door open. Then we were blundering down the steps and into the darkened, cellar-like room. A beam of light shone out from Rider's pocket-lamp; it shone upon the open door of the mysterious cupboard.

Then I saw that this cupboard was different from other cupboards in that, where the back should have been there showed only a gaping cavity! Rider glanced all about the room and all about the cupboard. Then, for the last time, pulled out his watch.

"Ten-forty-eight! *We have one minute!*"

He leapt into the cavity and went blundering forward. I followed and found my feet upon clay soil. Dimly, in the reflected light of Rider's lamp, I saw that this was a crude passage cut through the damp earth and upheld at intervals by roughly placed timbers. Bent almost double, for the roof was low, Rider pressed on. A dull and distant rumbling

came to my ears, and the place seemed to shake.

We were come to the end of the tunnel.

On a wooden ledge, placed across from side to side, stood a square iron box about a foot in diameter, and attached to it was a contrivance which reminded me of a taximeter. Above the ever increasing roar, which, now, I recognized, I could hear the *tick-tick-tick* of the clock-like thing.

"Hold the lamp!"

Rider's voice now was icily cool. He thrust the lamp into my hands, and as I directed the ray upon the machine on the plank, he set to work with deft fingers.

Tick-tick-tick-tick!

What he did, I do not know to this day; I only know that it was well done, that it was executed as though Rider were regulating a watch. My eyes, whilst they perceived the fingers rapidly at work with the mechanism of the machine, yet were fixed upon the clock face set in it . . . and this registered:—
10.49.

Tick-tick-tick-tick!

I knew that 10.49 must be, almost to a second, the exact time!

Tick-tick!—and the ticking ceased. It was done!

Rider pulled out from a crevice in the contrivance the ends of two pieces of flex, which descended from the roof . . . and collapsed at my feet.

"Gun - cotton!" he muttered. "Those wires connect to the electric main!"

The muffled roar became deafening. The place about me quivered and rocked. My ears seemed to ache with the sound. Then it grew fainter—more faint—and died away.

I glanced down at Rider. Pallid, his face showed in the lamplight.

"The ten-thirty Folkestone Ex-

press!" he whispered hoarsely. "Bearing the Field Marshal commanding the British Expeditionary Force."
 I clutched at the wall to steady myself.
 "But—" Rider Pasha swooned.

IN ARCADIA

BY GEORGE B. MOREWOOD

"O H, Echo! sweet nymph of the rock and the wood,
 Come give me some counsel—I'd smile if you should!"
Echo: "You should!"

"I long have believed every sibyl a sham;
 Are you eager to tell me how foolish I am?"
Echo: "I am."

"Fair nymph, I'm prepared to believe all you say,
 And to do as you bid me—advise what you may!"
Echo: "You may."

"Then a secret I'll whisper; sweet Echo, I love!
 Am I wise in my course, or do you disapprove?"
Echo: "Approve."

"Her eyes are deep azure; her lips, Cupid's bow;
 And of all womankind she's the fairest, I know!"
Echo: "I know."

"Her laughter is music—her speech like the tune
 Of some fair mountain streamlet. You'll hear it eft-soon!"
Echo: "Eft-soon?"

"Since she promised to meet me, I know she is near,
 But so light falls her foot that no rustle I hear."
Echo: "I hear."

"Her poise is so graceful, no nymph it would shame,
 And the wind, through the leaves, to my ear breathes her name!"
Echo: "Her name?"

"Ah, at last I can spy her!—She comes through yon dell.
 If, Echo, I whispered her name, would you tell?"
Echo: "You tell!"

"No, I don't think I'll trust you—you are not discreet;
 And the things that you hear you're too apt to repeat."
Echo: "Repeat?"

"Yes; and now, lest my love catch me flirting with you,
 I am sure 'tis but prudent to bid you adieu."
Echo: "Adieu!"

MOVING AND FEEDING AN ARMY

BY MAJOR-GENERAL JOHN F. O'RYAN AND CAPTAIN
W. D. A. ANDERSON

[The problems of transportation and supply are among the most important ones that confront leaders of armies, but outside of military circles they are little comprehended. The following article, which is taken from the authors' forthcoming book "The Modern Army in Action," throws light on a subject that should be more generally understood at this time.—EDITOR.]

SO enormous are the supplies that must be furnished to armies of the size with which modern wars are fought, that their campaigns are largely governed by this consideration. In the days of Napoleon great wagon trains were formed with convoys of troops to protect them during their march to the front. The breakdown of this service, due to the failure to make proper allowance for the difficulties of traversing the dirt roads of Russia, was principally responsible for the collapse of the campaign against Moscow in 1812. Prior to the last decade campaigns of large forces were entirely limited to theaters of war that could be readily supplied by rail and water routes. The development of automobile transport extends this sphere to include regions of paved roads. But not even this improved transportation can overcome the obstacles of mud or mountains.

In the American Civil War President Lincoln was particularly interested in the advance of the Northern armies from Cincinnati to Knoxville, in the valley of the Tennessee, in order to support the local population that was largely Unionist in sympathies. Every commanding general was urged by the President to prosecute this campaign. In spite of every support of numbers, equipment, supplies, and administrative backing, every general reported this move as an unwise waste of forces due to the

impossibility of maintaining supplies when dependent solely upon wagon transport along the long line of communications over the dirt roads of the low country and over the rocky roads of the mountains. Due to a rail route for supplying the army, it was a less difficult military problem to conduct a campaign of six hundred miles through Louisville, Nashville, and Chattanooga to Knoxville than it was to advance two hundred and fifty miles on the direct line over the mountains.

So dependent are military operations upon lines of railroad that the major portion of the rail development of central Europe during the last sixty years has been determined in route and location by military requirements rather than by commercial needs. A glance at a map of Germany will show a network of railways in Alsace and Lorraine, although the commercial demand is very small. Between Cologne and the Belgian border is another similar network, but one more warranted by the amount of local traffic. One of the French conditions for the large loans to Russia in recent years was reported to be the construction of strategic railways to the Polish border.

Not only are railroads necessary for the supply service, but also for the rapid transportation to the front of the corps that form the army. So absorbed is interest in the activities of the troops after their arrival at

the front that we overlook the problem of transporting them. To move one single army corps with its supplies and field transport requires one hundred and sixty railroad trains. These cannot be moved forward one behind the other; they would congest the track for twelve miles. An experience like this occurred at Tampa in 1898, during the dispatch of the first expedition to Cuba. This small movement of seventeen thousand men swamped the rail facilities of the Florida seaport. Every switch was filled, yet cars were stacked up along the track for miles.

The main line of the railroad is not the only need; there must also be an ample supply of side tracks long enough to hold a complete train so that all cars may be unloaded at once. For the prompt and convenient concentration of a corps 160 of these side tracks would be required. But each separate command of the armies of a large nation contains four to six corps. A careful time chart must, then, be worked out for routing trains in both directions so as to get the empty cars out of the way of the loaded trains. And this reduces the capacity of the railroads so that the rate of concentration at the frontier becomes approximately an army corps every three days for every single line of track.

In this preparation for concentration Germany leads the world. Since 1909 her principal rail development has been the construction of great concentration yards at the rail centers in Lorraine and in Rhenish Prussia. France followed suit in the district south and east of Nancy, but had not provided facilities equal to those of the Germans when the War of 1914 broke out. It was this provision for the rapid delivering of armies on the border that aided Germany in concentrating such enormous armies on her frontier within

a few days of the outbreak of war.

In the transportation of such immense armies as are involved in this war every detail must fit in like clock-work. If any cog slips it may stop the whole works. Plans are made up far in advance and are kept up to date by yearly revisions. A schedule is made out for days counting from the date of the mobilization order. Every day has its assigned duties for every organization in preparation for mobilization and for entraining. The complete time schedule for the train is prepared ready for use when the state takes over the railways for the war service. The destination of every regiment is planned, as is the assignment of its units to the twelve trains required for its transportation. The exact hour of departure is scheduled, and so are the times and places for taking on water and coal, for passing other trains and for stopping for meals for the troops. Even the stations at these meal stops are prepared to furnish definite amounts of water, coffee, and hot soup at definite times to the troops as they come through. The stop is only for time sufficient for each man to fill his canteen, cup, and pan; bread is served and the meal is eaten while under way.

All of these plans are completely prepared to the last detail by the branches of the General Staff and the Supply Corps during times of peace. Every regimental commander has his complete orders filed at his headquarters. Just as the British fleet was started against Germany by a brief wireless, reported as being "Go ahead," so at the outbreak of hostilities the war office of each nation needs only to send a short message directing the execution of the orders already filed.

The influence of rail routes on campaigns is most notably shown in the Manchurian campaign of the

Russo-Japanese War in 1904-1905. The whole fighting was limited to the one single-track railroad from Dalny north to Mukden. The battles consisted of contending lines squarely across the railroad, while the few detached moves were based on the railroad and were sent out only far enough to maneuver against the enemy's flank.

Next to railways, water routes are most necessary for military campaigns. The importance of navigable rivers in facilitating the advance of armies is shown in the two-year campaign against Vicksburg, where the advances by land were checked at Shiloh, Iuka, Corinth, and Holly Springs. It was only after control of the Mississippi was gained that the advance down the river enabled the Union Army successfully to carry out the campaign that had seemed well nigh hopeless by land.

In Grant's campaign against Richmond in 1864 his plan of campaign was based on keeping in touch with water transportation. At Spottsylvania Courthouse his army was based on Aquia Creek and the Potomac River; for the next advance the base was moved to Port Royal on the Rappahannock. Later it was moved to West Point on the York River, and finally to the James, as the successful advance reached the vicinity of Petersburg.

Command of the sea is of immense strategic value in enabling the dominant nation to strike where it will. Such was the condition that enabled Great Britain, during the Seven Years' War of Prussia and Great Britain against the rest of Europe to capture and hold her present great dependencies, Canada and India. It was British naval predominance again during the Napoleonic era that protected the nation from the fate that overtook the continental countries.

In the campaign under General Kitchener in 1898 for the reconquest of Khartoum and the Soudan the essential factor of the British success was the use of the Nile for transportation, supplemented by the special military railroad built during the campaign to parallel its banks and to carry supplies around its rapids.

Whether the supplies be forwarded to the advanced base by rail or water, the final distribution must be made to the companies by wagon or auto truck. The wagon has the advantage that it can get through almost any difficulties of road or ground, where the auto would be hopelessly stuck. The auto truck, though, can carry as much as five wagons and can go ten times as far. When the mules or horses are tired at the end of their fourteen-mile haul the wagon must stop. The automobile, however, needs only a change of chauffeur to keep going for as long as gasoline and a relief of chauffeurs can be provided. For a country of well developed highways like France or Germany the auto facilitates greatly the supply and also the transportation of troops. It supplements and augments the rail service and increases enormously the mobility of armies.

For the maintenance of the fighting strength of the army at the front it must be furnished a steady supply of food and a sufficient store of ammunition to keep it always ready for vigorous physical efforts and for the fullest possible development of rifle and artillery fire. A man can easily fire three hundred rounds of rifle ammunition during a battle, while a field gun is limited only by the number of shells that can be supplied during the course of the engagement.

No country can hope to manufacture during wartime the large amount of ammunition used up in the first battles. It would cripple her ar-

mies from the start and would expose them to defeat by equal forces aided by better equipment. After a couple of months of war the factories can expand their facilities sufficiently to supply the steady demand, but the munitions for the first few weeks must be provided in times of peace and stored ready for war.

Complete stocks of rifles, field guns and their accessories are manufactured or purchased in sufficient numbers to equip the largest armies that the nation will have call to put in the field. They are then labeled for assignment to special organizations on mobilization and are stored in separate groups, ready for prompt issue when the emergency arises.

Food supplies are more difficult to store, but are more easily obtained in case of need. Consequently no large stocks are maintained in times of peace except at the fortresses along the frontiers. Since the headquarters will be strained to the limit by the ordinary demands of mobilization and concentration, it can ill afford at this urgent time to be burdened with the provisioning of these strongholds. Consequently each fortress maintains even in peace times a store of hard bread, salt meat, flour and dried vegetables, sufficient to subsist its garrison for several months in the event of a siege. In this way the forts form supporting points along the frontier, ready to check and delay any sudden invasion of the enemy, thus gaining time for the concentration of their own armies in rear.

Such a function was performed by the fortress of Metz in 1870, which by its control of the direct rail route, delayed the German advance on Paris until their military engineers could construct a by-pass from Remilly to Pont-a-Mousson to carry their trains past Metz without coming under the fire of its forts. Such also was the part played by Liège and Namur at

the outbreak of the present conflict.

In order to be ready for war the supply department must keep track of all available food supplies and must be prepared to obtain prompt possession of such as would be needed on the call for mobilization. In order to provide for the large and continuous demands when the armies take the field, great depots are formed at the rail centers, where provisions of all sorts are collected. These are then forwarded as needed to advanced bases close to the battle line.

When large armies are in the field they will quickly eat up all stocks of provisions if the communication with the home depot is broken. At the same time they cannot be burdened with the immediate care of large stocks of stores that would not be needed for a number of days. Such excessive trains appreciably limit the mobility of the command and detract from its fighting value.

It was this factor that helped to delay the success of the British campaign against the Boers in 1900. The Boers lived on a simple ration, largely collected in the theater of operations, while the major part of the British columns were incommoded by long trains carrying the supplies which their troops were accustomed to demand. The lighter equipment enabled the Boer commandos to attack in one place, and then move rapidly to deliver another attack in another district. This activity made it necessary for Great Britain to send to South Africa a force several times the strength of the Boer armies before she could overcome them.

While the army must reduce its baggage trains to the minimum, it must also take precautions against a failure of the supply of food. This is done by the maintenance of the advanced bases at the railroads or at the nearest boat landings. From this

point the supplies are sent forward in trains of wagons or automobiles, which are organized so that each train carries enough rations for one division for one day. A constant stream of trains between the advanced base and the front is thus kept up, the aim being to keep always within reach of the troops enough rations for three days. The schedule of service is laid out so that a loaded train will arrive at the front just as the one already there is emptied of its stores. This latter then returns to the base to replenish and to continue the service.

So important is the safeguarding of an army's supplies that it demands a care and attention only exceeded by the strategic planning of maneuvers to defeat the enemy. The feeding of an army is necessary to its fighting; the best of troops cannot survive the physical weakening and moral strain consequent upon deprivation of proper nourishment. The general in command, while watching the enemy in front, must also keep an eye on his line of communications, for any move against this line threatens him in a vital point. The line of communications is like an artery nourishing the arm; if the artery be cut, the arm loses its striking power. Only if the flow of blood be quickly restored, can the limb be saved from destruction and its fighting power be restored.

At all times the supply trains en route to the front require a guard to prevent thefts, and when in a hostile territory this protection requires a large armed force. The trains stretch over a great deal of road, about one mile to every hundred vehicles. When in an invasion the trains are exposed to raids of the enemy's cavalry, their defense may require a small army. Their capture may seriously influence the whole campaign.

In the invasion of Austria by Fred-

erick the Great in 1758 his campaign was defeated and he was forced to abandon the siege of Olmutz on account of the capture of a great train of three thousand wagons. In the consequent retreat to Prussia he had to detach one half of his army to protect the four thousand wagons that carried his war materials and supplies.

In 1846, at the beginning of the Mexican War, General Taylor found the supply of his army on the Rio Grande opposite Matamoros so threatened by the Mexican detachments in his rear that he had to take his entire army, except one regiment, to march back twenty-five miles to the base at Point Isabel in order to bring forward in safety the supplies needed for the maintenance of his troops.

In December, 1862, Grant's campaign against Vicksburg had advanced to Oxford, two hundred miles south of his base at Columbus, Ky., and thirty miles south of his advanced base at Holly Springs, Miss. In the last two weeks of the year the Confederate cavalry leader, Forrest, cut his communications by destroying sixty miles of railroad near Jackson, Tenn., while Van Dorn captured the base at Holly Springs. By hard marching on half rations Grant's army escaped to Memphis, but the campaign by this route was defeated.

Rail communication must likewise be thoroughly protected from interruption in order to permit a vigorous prosecution of the campaign at the front. In the campaign of Sherman from Chattanooga to Atlanta in 1864, he reached the latter city with 82,000 men. The guarding of the long line of rail back through Chattanooga to Nashville had caused the detachment of 115,000 men.

All of this preparation and organization is to the end of supplying

daily bread and meat to the soldier at the front, the man who does the fighting. He is already loaded with a nine-pound rifle, 150 rounds of ammunition, with blanket, rain cape, raversack, mess kit, and an extra pair of shoes. His total pack runs from fifty to sixty pounds in the various countries. Hence by furnishing rations daily this addition to his load is kept small.

However, prudence dictates that he shall have a certain provision in case of a failure to receive rations when due, and this is provided by requiring every man to carry, in addition to the day's subsistence, a second full ration, and one or more emergency rations. These last are compressed cakes of chocolate, biscuit, and dried meat. A cake the size of a man's hand furnishes nourishment for a day if divided into three morsels, but it is far from satisfying.

The staple items of the ration must necessarily be such that they will stand heat and storage without serious loss in nutriment or flavor. In all nations these consist of about thirteen ounces of salt meat, twenty-six ounces of hard bread and seven ounces of rice or peas, with small portions of sugar, salt, and coffee. Every effort is made to supplement the diet by fresh meat and vegetables, levied or purchased in the immediate vicinity of the troops. This living off the country is carried much further in Europe than it is in the British or American practice. The collection of all available supplies in the district occupied is especially the duty of the supply officer of every division. The forwarding of the necessary additional items from the depots is a routine matter in which he is only an agent. He is immediately responsible for the full utilization of the resources of his district.

The importance of this method of subsistence is twofold. It varies and

improves the diet of the men and, still more important, it relieves the line of communications of the transportation of supplies to a large extent. It is rare that complete subsistence can be obtained by this means and then only for a limited time. The deficiencies must in every case be made up by supplies forwarded from the depots.

Two methods of utilization of local resources are used. One is to estimate the stock of food in the district and then to levy all that can be taken without immediate privation for the residents. Since the cities will have a smaller proportion of food than the countries, their deficiency is made up by cash levies. In home territory or a friendly country the supplies are paid for at once; in a hostile district they may be taken without payment.

The other method, always used in Europe as far as possible, is to billet the troops upon the householders. Every householder is assumed to be able to feed and shelter a number of soldiers equal to that of his family for a five-day period. Thereafter the billeting is continued for shelter, but rations are furnished by the military supply service. This system also saves the supply service the burden of providing and carrying large stores of tentage. In the home country the payment for billeting is so liberal that it is sought for during maneuvers by the housewives as a moneymaking proposition.

When billeting cannot be carried out the companies mess as units whenever possible. The meat and vegetable components are put together and are made into a stew in the big boilers and fireless cookers with which each company is provided. The fireless cookers, built into carts, are loaded up in the morning, and at the noon halt have a supply of hot coffee and soup ready to supplement the bread that the men have

carried in their haversacks. It is even attempted to provide fresh bread at intervals as a relief to the monotonous diet of hardtack. Field bakeries are provided, one for each division, which catch up with the armies for every prolonged halt, and start a regular bread service.

So enormous is this task of supplying armies in the field that unless every detail is carefully provided for, the operations of the armies may be seriously embarrassed. It can be handled only by spreading out the responsibility, by decentralization. This is done by making each army corps independent in its service.

The chief supply officer, on the staff of the corps commander, has entire charge of the advanced base for his corps and of the automobile and wagon transport for forwarding supplies from the advanced base to the front. He sends into the nearest general depot timely requisitions in order to maintain in the advanced base a ten-day supply of all classes of supplies. The railroad service or communication service is then responsible for delivering the stores in bulk, by the train load, to the commander of the advanced base. The organization there divides up the items and makes up the shipments to the divisions and regiments.

While the ration service is more emphasized above as being the largest problem, the supply of ammunition, clothing and forage is carried out in a similar way and by the same organization.

Ammunition is forwarded from the advanced base only when combat has made necessary the replenishing of the stock at the front. The columns for the service are made up of the caissons used with the field artillery so that the individual caissons can take their places in batteries to replace those whose supply has been used up. Similar caissons are pro-

vided to haul the rifle cartridges to the infantry, but ordinary vehicles can be used if necessary.

Hay is enormously bulky; consequently the continental armies attempt to furnish only grain for the animals. These are expected to pick up enough "roughness" to balance their feed. On rapid raids or forced marches the conditions are especially hard on the horses. To exhaustion is added insufficient feeding; the consequent wastage of animals amounts to large figures.

The issues of clothing form an item whose importance is easily overlooked. Conditions of campaign use up clothes fast; every three months the soldier will need a complete new outfit. Shoes seem almost to melt away in the marching in dew and mud. Any Civil War veteran can tell tales of the "fadeaways" of the issues of that period. The life of the best shoes in campaign hardly exceeds thirty days.

To these difficulties further complications are added by winter. Modern wars require that fighting shall go on irrespective of the weather, so extra precautions must be taken to mitigate the hardships of the season. Heavy overcoats, mits, hoods, and foot wrappings must be furnished in abundance. The service is enough to tax sorely the resources of the state.

Since every wagon, truck, and gun carriage must have a driver, since the railroads and military arsenals must be manned, working forces must be provided, and guards everywhere, it is readily seen that the supply service uses up a large part of the enrolled military strength of the state. This total service, called the service of the rear, easily uses up twenty per cent. of the men called into service. However, the older men are used for these duties, so that the pick of the fighting strength of the state stays with the fighting line.

THE CAPITULATION OF COBB

BY T. UZZELL

THE day England declared war against Germany the old veteran broke his custom of thirteen years by rising at eight o'clock instead of at ten and by glancing at his newspaper before he had had his coffee or had gone through the sacred ceremony of filling his four pipes and laying them ready to hand on the mantelpiece. From my little room above I heard him roll off his cot, rustle the newspaper a moment, and then limp into the back area-way to proclaim the news to his wife.

"Mol, this means war!" he shouted. His old wife was very deaf. "Hengland 'as declared war. An' its agin them dishonorable Dutchmen—the Kaiser, pfoo! There'll be fightin' for sure now. They'll be blastin' the bugles and callin' the boys! Mol, ain't ye glad?"

Molly was not glad, as I well knew, and she kept silence as she went about her work. How often during those last days of terrible suspense had she told me, on bringing me my coffee and toast in the morning, that the world was full enough already of "onkind deeds and sufferin' folks without men should 'ave to set about to gun each other to death." She understood Sam's military mania and nourished a fearful concern lest the excitement rouse him to commit some strange madness.

Grumbling at women's dishonorable neutrality and general incompetence when matters of great moment are to be decided, the old veteran stamped back to his basement bedroom, kicking the dog on the way. Kicking the dog was a record for Sam, for, though he cordially hated

the animal, he had never before shown his ire in any way but in the use of barrack-room vituperation. Now the dog howled dismally, ran to Molly and cowered by her skirts for protection. Sam had declared for war and Molly against it; Sam had crossed the frontier by kicking Molly's beloved Tody—something was bound to happen.

That evening Molly and I were staggered to hear the lame old veteran declare his intention of enlisting to fight the Germans.

Our queer little family sat in silence in the tiny basement kitchen. The low, age-browned ceiling, clean, uneven floor and smooth-rubbed furniture fitted closely and appropriately about the gaunt, quiet, home-loving personality of my landlady. Here we had been accustomed to sit each evening for years; old Cobb re-read his morning paper, tapped his pipe from time to time on the black fender and recharged it from an old salt sack dangling from a coat button; Molly knitted or darned Sam's socks or gazed yearningly yet resignedly into the twinkling grate. Tody, his rusty muzzle snuggled over his four paws, dozed on the hearth, springing up occasionally, as if something expected had happened, pouncing upon his own person and nibbling savagely.

Molly cooked and slept, with her "darlin' Tody," in the little, odorous cellar kitchen, while Cobb kept himself, his cot, charred pipes, framed pension diploma and sacred library of half-penny papers in the even smaller room next to the kitchen which opened on the area-way below

the street. Other cherished possessions of the old soldier were an old, faded service uniform, shako, and rusty bayonet which he had preserved from Egyptian campaigns. There was also an "honorable retirement" certificate, some yellow war maps and a single, coverless, curly-edged book, Shakespeare's jingo play of "King Henry V."

Cobb was a sterling patriot.

Aside from his ardent military and patriotic leanings and his arrogant pride in having once been "an honorable member" of the Queen's Own Hussars, the rheumatic old soldier possessed a pension of a few shillings a week, a bad temper, a chronic distaste for work and an intolerant hatred of Molly's "collie" dog. His wife was totally shut out from participation in any of his sympathy or affection, all of which was bestowed upon a grand contemplation of his heroic past and an imaginary affiliation with military and titled figures who figured conspicuously in the newspapers.

Each morning he spent three hours blue-penciling the court news and items concerning London's famous men and women; after which he folded his paper up neatly, put it under the old boot on top of the pile on the coal box and wheezed forth into the Lane, across Kensington Gore and into Hyde Park. There I had often seen him sitting in his accustomed bench near Rotten Row whence he closely observed the royalty and titled and military horsemen, all of whom he knew at sight and greeted by saluting or raising his hat. As they galloped by, he noted down their names and titles in full with his stub of blue pencil.

At dusk, groaning aloud at some new stiffness discovered in his leg wounded in battle, he hobbled through Albert Gate, drank his two pints of ale at the "Old Cock" and

came home for dinner. How mean his surroundings then seemed to him, how cruel his fate, how disgusted he became at the frail, soft-voiced, tender-handed figure of Molly, his ministering and devoted wife!

The old veteran's fingers began to tremble that evening as he read; his puffing, which before had been deliberate and meditative, suddenly came spasmodically in clouds from his lips, until he dragged himself from his low seat, swept the little kitchen with a stiff, swimming motion of both arms and shouted:

"We've got to fight them Dutchmen. Belgians nor Frenchers can't stop them devils. It'll take the Queen's Hussars to settle this war!" He leaned over and shouted into Molly's ear: "I'm goin' to 'list, do y' 'ear? I've got one leg and a toler'ble good eye—do y' see that harm!" He bared a hairy forearm and ran on with his declamation oblivious of his Molly and of me and our detestation of human slaughter. He carnavaled far afield with clashing swords, neighing, wounded horses and the groans and shock of battle.

Molly, helpless, dismayed, let her knitting fall through her trembling fingers, gazed at her gesticulating husband, and finally collapsed in her chair. Her house of hope had tumbled about her ears when it seemed to be completed and secure. She did not want her Samuel to go to war.

The knocker on the floor above rattled loudly through the silent house. Tody, who served as door bell to his deaf mistress, scrambled into the hall, waking the echoes with his tumultuous barking; Sam swore with soldierly eloquence, and I bore off to my room, while Molly opened the door upon a cockney neighbor who had dropped in "for a bit of a chat, Mrs. Cobb."

The visitor chattered of her neighborly generosity in wanting to come and sit by the grate with Molly for a few minutes, "bein' has she hain't 'ad no comp'ny since comin' to Cockpit Lane." Molly hesitated. The redoubtable Sam never allowed Molly to have company while he was home; and when once he discovered a "foreign 'airpin," incriminating evidence that a visitor had come in his absence, he persecuted Molly for her "igh treason and treachery."

Molly's caller willy-nilly led the way below. I stood at my door and listened. Sam, his wrath rising, was waiting for them.

"What d'ye want 'ere?" he challenged belligerently, as the two women appeared. "Don't ye know yet that the King's at war? This ain't no time to be gossipin' and yarnin' by the fireside."

The visitor interrupted timorously: "Mayn't I set a moment, sor? Molly sayd as she be lonely nights, an' bein's I be without no folks and afraid now that the soldiers—"

"'Tis against my orders, mum?" interrupted Sam, expanding with rage. "I'm a soger o' the Queen, and I'm retired honorably on a pension by 'er Gracious Majesty; this 'earthstone is my castle and I'll not 'ave it trajuced by no foreign beggars an' cockney potwallopers. Take 'er out, Mol. Lave the premises at once, mum, or I'll do sommat—"

The two women crept back up the narrow stairs. As the ejected visitor passed my door, I heard her mumbling to herself, "Devil toike sech a 'usband; I'd pisen 'is dum beer, I wud, I'd pisen—" The women parted in silence.

The next morning before Sam had awakened, I sat by my window waiting for Molly to bring me my coffee and observed with sinking heart what effect the awful war was having on the life in our quiet little Lane.

Cockpit Lane was one of those pleasant little backwater eddies that sometimes manage to hide themselves on the very brink of one of the broad, roaring streams of traffic which sweep down the curving thoroughfares of the West End. It was more like a Latin Quarter than Soho itself. Already the war spirit had penetrated to this peaceful region of flat-chested, two-story brick houses and smoking chimney-pots. A drove of blooded horses commandeered from Tattersall's for English officers' use in the field were stamping and whinnying by the curb. Trunks, bed clothing and bric-a-brac belonging to German roomers who had been forcibly ejected, littered the sidewalk. A stout costermonger's wife sprinkled with flour was tacking an improvised sign over her door: "Germans not wanted."

Molly Cobb, accompanied by her dog, entered and arranged the fragrant toasted scones, tiny, steaming coffee pot, and dainty pats of butter bedewed by the ice-box. Her timid anxiety to please was touching.

"I say," I shouted horribly, "has Mr. Cobb really decided to enlist?"

"Aw, the naughty dog!" she replied. She was too sensitive ever to tell me when she did not understand and she feared constantly that Tody might disturb me.

"Come 'ere, Tody, I soi!" she called, with an effort at sternness in her voice. In spite of my protests, she sank to her knees and peered under the bed. "Ah, 'e's the troil o' my loife! I'll 'ave to whip 'im, sir."

She pushed the canine into the hall, closed the door and soon I heard her slapping her knee, simulating the whipping the dog might have received. A few minutes later she had the big, stiff animal in her frail arms kissing it and pouring out words of wistful endearment.

Poor, kind, childless Molly Cobb! How painful and pathetic were her tremulous efforts to find someone, something by which she might satisfy her hungering and yearning for sacrifice. She had no means of giving herself, of expending the affection which for years she had smothered within her. She lived alone, imprisoned within herself, abandoned by all save by her mongrel, over-fed, rusty-haired dog. Tody was indeed her one consolation and joy, and though he was, to my mind, a silly and unprincipled canine, he nevertheless wore the human character of kinsfolk.

"Aw, Molly Cobb," old Sam had told me once, "she kin crisp a chop not bad, sor, but otherways she's just a sheep-witted, no account she-femile. She ust to narrite 'er troubles, but she wearid me bones and I minded 'er to keep 'er peace. She ain't spoke much since."

As I sat thus, and mused, I heard the old soldier wake as usual with a snort, growl to the dog to "go lay down, you flee-chasin', milk-suppin' sheep-houn'" and shout for his coffee. Instead of settling himself to his newspapers and his pipes, he floundered about, swearing, and rummaged in an old chest which for years had rested untouched beneath his cot.

An hour later I was dumfounded to behold him stride forth into the Lane clad in the faded, ill-fitting regimentals worn by the Third Lancashire corps of the Queen's Royal Hussars in the Egyptian campaigns of 1884. Breeches once crimson were stuffed clumsily into cracked and dusty boots; a blue blouse, now far too small, drew his shoulders back, forced his arms out at his sides, and gaped open by several buttons over his ample stomach. A shako rested jauntily on one side of his head; a rusty, naked bayonet dangled

at his left hip and a huge, murderous-looking cavalry pistol hung half out of a trouser pocket. He might have been taken for an ancient figure from an abandoned wax works. At sight of him I knew not whether to laugh or give way to tears.

The old soldier marched off up the Lane towards Hyde Park. I seized my hat and followed. Other people were so absorbed in reading their newspapers and cheering the busloads of troops that whirled by on their way to the railroad stations, that the old veteran was scarcely noticed, though a policeman and a boy here and there gazed at him in amazement.

He marched out upon the open green between Rotten Row and the Serpentine River where Lord Kitchen's officers were recruiting the eager, patriotic young men of England. The burning August sun struck silver gleams from the Serpentine among the big cottonwoods, and flashed in radiant and picturesque splendor on the helmets and metal trappings of the officers.

The old veteran straightened his arms down at his sides at the sight and quickened his gait. Here for years had he beheld the brilliant and imposing reviews of the Imperial Guard by the King; over this beautiful piece of greensward he had often gazed in adoration at the royal children, escorted by equeries in scarlet doublets, doeskin tights and fluttering, black beavers; here on this sacred soil he himself was now marching to join the colors and fight for England.

An officer prancing by on a foam-flecked bay beheld the queer military figure and drew up before him. Sam Cobb's boot heels came smartly together. He saluted. The officer respectfully returned the salute, exclaiming, "Well, comrade, what's this? Off to the war?" The officer

dismounted and the two engaged a moment in earnest conversation. Then they walked toward the center of the green where long lines of civilians were drawn up before shouting officers and military clerks seated before stacks of paper on deal tables.

The eyes of two thousand young Englishmen were turned on the old veteran. Not one of them laughed or made a single gesture of ridicule.

The recruiting captain spoke with the officer, shook the old veteran by the hand, placed his arm on his shoulder, faced the lines of recruits and addressed them. His words, which I could not catch, produced a subtle and magical effect. This military ghost of the past, this visible representative of the most glorious fighting days of Imperial England mellowed their tragic earnestness and filled some of their eyes with tears. As old Cobb was led away by the officer, they all, laborers in jumpers, cricket-players in white trousers, clerks in top hats, straightened up, clenched their fists and instinctively saluted.

Molly, as she opened the door to me an hour later, trembled as though with the ague. "Oh, sir," she cried, clasping and unclasping her thin, pale hands, "'tis an awful mess we're in. Tody 'as et up 'is honorable dismissal and made game with 'is pichers of the blessed Queen. I was out a-shoppin' and locked the door on Tody, because, you know, sir, 'ow 'e runs mad on the street and gets under the wheels o' the vehicles. Oh Lordy, 'tis a foine pickle we're in. 'E shouldn't 'av left 'is chest open. Dear Tody h'is a proper little dog and 'e know 'is place; but 'e ain't never been learned not to eat honorable diplomas and portraits o' the Queen. 'Hi'll tie a knot in the dum dog's tail,' 'e says. Pore Tody! 'E says we're henemies o' Hengland an'

that 'e'll desert us. Oh Lordy, Lordy!"

By the next morning the story of Sam Cobb's adventure with the recruiting officers had reached all the gossips of the Lane.

It was at that quiet hour when Sam Cobb, together with our whole little snuggery of foreign lodgers is generally asleep and only the cockney landladies are abroad shaking rugs, chalking the front doorsteps and, like Olympians, distributing caustic censure liberally among lamp-post lovers, absconding Germans and bibulous husbands. The Lane had been cleansed of Germans and cavalry horses and the women who could not read were listening to the news of the war from those who had taken an early glance at some lodger's newspaper. Molly was among them, watching their lips with painful attention, visibly struggling against her embarrassment and smiling graciously, though she understood nothing.

Suddenly, a colossal woman with huge red arms and a head bald save for a tiny dough-like wad of white hair on her crown, leaned over Molly and shouted in her ear:

"Yer 'usband ain't no good fer a soger, Mrs. Cobb, I 'ear. I 'ear 'e 'as a wooden leg. Like it is 'is 'ead, Mrs. Cobb, eh? I know what 'usbands be. Let 'im toike the dog out a-airin'; there's no danger in that; the dog knows 'ow to git 'ome, ha ha!" She laughed with innocent, peasant heartiness.

Molly must have understood, for she began to reply soberly: "'E'd not do for sogerin' now, and I think this 'ere war is 'orrible what would toike awy our 'usbands—" Just then a look of horror overspread Molly's face. She looked transfixed at the window beneath which the old pensioner smoked and slept, and, mumbling something about Tody, hastened into the house.

Behind the door Molly paused, listening. Sam had already risen an hour before his time and was floundering about like a grampus, swearing at the barking Tody: "Go lay down, you flea-chasin' rat! You'd eat up the Queen, eh?" And a heavy boot banged against the wall.

A few minutes later the crash came.

"What 'er them she-idjuts talkin' o' out there?" bellowed Sam, as Molly came below.

No answer. Molly seldom spoke to Sam except to warn him that it was chilly out, that she had sewn a button on or had done something else for his lumpish ease.

"I 'eard 'em talkin'," he continued. "What right 'ave them bloomin' fools—" I tiptoed to the stairs and looked over the railing and down into the kitchen, the door of which stood open. Sam Cobb, coatless and collarless, stood beside the table, his florid cheeks distended with rage, his jaw moving from side to side, his stiff, short fingers curling into fists and straightening again. Molly sat on the hummocky sofa looking at him as though hypnotized with fear. Tody's head was in her lap, his dumb, pitying eyes fixed on her face and his bushy tail beating a tattoo against a chair leg.

The old soldier's decrepit intellect wrestled desperately with the new problem of publicly insulted dignity. "You've made a public fool o' me, madam!" he mouthed, using, in his impotent rage, the imagined language of his lord and lady patrons. "These vermin cockneys—pfoo!" He spat.

Molly cringed and clung to Tody's long rusty ears. She suffered in silence. She was used to it.

"You've trajuced the honor of a soger o' the Queen!" thundered Sam, "and I'll not stay, dummed if I do. 'Tis good-bye, madam. Mark that!"

"'Tis oight year ago, Sammy," interrupted Molly, full of sobs with-in but unable to burst into tears, "'tis oight year since you and me—there, you've gone and split that neckband agin—let me 'av it to-night and I'll —" I tiptoed back to my room.

The next day Sam Cobb gathered up his bizarre personalia and prepared to depart. He stuffed all his newspapers into huge dry-goods boxes; his faded uniforms, pipes, tarnished snuffboxes, rusty cartridges, soiled postcards of royalty punctured by Tody's teeth, he tied into various bundles, numbered carefully, and deposited on the floor by the door. He found his meals at the taverns for three days, but postponed his departure. He came in grumbling and pottered about like a nervous bear; a true Tommy Atkins, long retired into private life, and now miserable, pulled up by the roots!

Molly Cobb made her beds, filled the lamps and scrubbed the dog in utter silence and gloom. She never went out on the street, but sat alone through the long evenings with her heavy dog in her arms. Once in her absent-mindedness she let Tody escape and the two of us gave chase to capture him. We found the scatterbrained animal racing like mad down a fashionable thoroughfare with a mighty beef roast in his jaws and a fat, gesticulating butcher in hot pursuit. The butcher, happily, was a German, and no one listened to his claim for damages.

"Is he going?" I wrote on my paper one morning.

"'E ain't gone yet," Molly replied mournfully.

"Why is he waiting?" I wrote again.

"'E can't find no other place to suit 'im, I fancy, sir. You see, we 'ave got so used to one another. An' 'e loikes 'is evenin' chop, sir. It ha' taken years to learn, sir. Then, mind

you," continued Molly, "it toikes twelve bob a week to feed 'im, and 'e gives me only seven of 'is pension pay. 'E needs the other shillin's for 'is beer. 'Tis a good thing, I'm for thinkin', that I've always taken roomers."

"Does he know that his pension money does not pay for his keep?" I wrote next, while Molly put her hand mechanically to her ear, as though I were speaking to her.

"I 'ave no wy o' knowin', sir. I fancy 'e don't know, tho' 'e'll find out now, sir, 'e will."

The next evening at the time when all England shook with the sobs and passionate, heart-broken farewells of parents and lovers with soldiers departing for the front, I entered our little house in Cockpit Lane about dusk. I halted, terrified, on the threshold. I heard a wail of weeping that stopped the beating of my heart. It was the cry of a woman who had known a life-long smouldering sorrow, but had never given way to it in tears. If I were God, I'd make it a fixed rule never to permit women at Molly's age to cry as she was crying when I reached home that night.

Tody had been run over and killed by an omnibus filled with troops. Old Cobb had happened along Kensington Gore just in time to see the crowd gather. The Juggernaut hooted along, reckless, determined, driven by that already historic command of Kitchener, "Victory now means rapid traffic; let England clear a way for the troops!" The old soldier brought the carcass home and laid it gently on the coal box in the area-way.

Poor Molly wrung her hands; gathered the stiffening body into her arms, rubbed her pale, sunken cheek against the silky ears, and sobbed hysterically, murmuring over and over with passionate tenderness,

"Tody, darlin'est, sweet'art, baby, my baby, O, mother's love, mother's baby love—"

Old Sam and I stood by looking on with huge lumps choking our throats and tears dropping from our cheeks, too stricken with sympathy to think of producing a handkerchief to wipe them away. Then I did not think that this flood of emotion released within Molly's breast had something in it of a blessing. She was crying freely and easily and with the loss of tears she lost her burden of smothered sorrow. I turned and fled into the Park. How could one shout consolation to a deaf woman!

When I returned an hour later, I witnessed an amazing sight. Old Sam had hobbled to the meat shop and bought eight big mutton chops; had made a fire in the little stove, and when I arrived, was making a great bustle, puffing and clattering about, coatless, amid an enveloping cloud of wood smoke and heavy odors of burning fat.

I stood silently at the door of the tiny kitchen. The old soldier plunged a grimy fist into a jar of flour, dashed all that remained under his fingers into a smoking skillet, and, flopping a chop in after it, folded his arms grandly over his stomach.

"I used to be able to shuffle a chop meself in old commissariat days," he muttered grimly between his teeth. He brandished aloft a huge, dripping spoon and mopped the perspiration from his eyes with his sleeve.

A movement at my elbow caused me to look around. It was Molly. She had been in Sam's room crying, but now stood watching him with swollen, reddened eyes, smiling. Smiling! Dear, quiet little landlady—the first genuine, happy smile in all the years I had known her! And her "precious, darlin' Tody" lay stiff and cold in the area-way.

"There's a patriot for ye!" exulted Sam, hands on hips, smiling at Molly. "The troops must go to the front and they killed the dum dog a-doin' hit. They wouldn't let me fight, so Mol she give her dog. Weren't it grand, sor? See, she's smilin' now. She's done sommat for Hengland and I'm a-gettin' up a feast, sor, in 'er honor. 'Devil toike ye,' says I to Jake, 'give me the finest chops in Hengland to-night. We're a-celebratin' for the old woman whose a-grievin' of 'er dog. None of yer 'orse meat,' says I. Come on, Mol, 'ere's yer place. Set 'ere, an' ye may wipe yer eyes with

the table cloth to-night, ye may."

Radiant in smiles, Molly, as if in a dream, took the chair Sam offered her in the middle of the kitchen, ever following him adoringly with her kindly, blue eyes, as he hobbled about, preparing dinner.

During the feast that night, Sam, from time to time, lumbered out into the area-way to take a look at the dead, and each time as he returned he stepped up to his wife's side, placed a great, heavy hand softly on her gray head and repeated his tender benediction: "'Tis sommat done for Hengland, Mol. The dum dog died for Hengland."

JESUS AND JOAN

BY STEPHEN PHILLIPS

WHEN Jesus greeted Joan in the after-twilight;
 When the Crucified kissed the Burned;
 Then softly they spoke together, solemnly, sweetly,
 They two so branded with life.
 But they spoke not at all of cross, or up-piled flaming,
 Or the going from them of God;
 But he was tender over the soul of the Roman
 Who pierced his side with the spear,
 And she was whist with pity for him that lighted
 The faggot in Rouen town.

THE MEDDLER

BY JESSIE W. McGRIFF

MUCH to her own chagrin and the amazement of the Literary Editor, Miss Mallory laid her head on the little pile of manuscripts before her and wept hysterically. To decide upon them—even to read them—was revolting. Nerves and body and brain, after many years of entire reliability, refused to do anything but stupidly throb and ache.

The Literary Editor behaved very creditably about it, continuing to mark proof until her last gasp was exhausted, when he turned and told her very kindly that "in view of her long and faithful service to the House" she could have three weeks' leave on full pay—to brace up and recover her deftness in picking out literary plums.

When she returned that evening to her tiny bachelor apartment, she found her unexpected freedom weighed heavily. It was too early in the season to go anywhere, and the rattle and bang of New York was something not to be idly endured. For the first time in her life she felt utterly and desperately lonely. Suddenly it occurred to her that she might visit her niece, Isabel Blair, whom she had not seen for so long that she was ashamed to think of it.

Fifteen years before, just as Virginia Mallory—then a pretty, self-centered, enthusiastic young person—had landed a coveted position on a big New York daily, there came the pathetic, tremulous appeal from the death-bed of her only sister, begging that Virginia renounce this first step towards large literary achievement, and devote her best years to bringing up little Isabel.

"Don't do it, Virginia, unless you want to," wrote Isabel's mother, "but, oh, my dear, try, *try*, to want to. You are all she has in the world, but she could never really belong to you if you remain in New York and live as you are doing."

For several days Virginia had writhed on the horns of her dilemma, then she finally decided that she would be deliberately evading her destiny should she permit dormant maternal instincts to overrule her active literary ones. So little Isabel was given over to Mrs. Gentison, a widow, who was a close friend of Isabel's mother, and who was striving to make both ends meet in a college career for her son, and Virginia returned to New York.

Of course it had not been Miss Mallory's intention to relinquish all claim to her niece. Indeed, for at least a year she made a point of writing to her once a week; then gradually the periods between letters lengthened until such time as Miss Mallory's stories began to appear in a few second-rate magazines, when she mailed these to Isabel, and thus altogether got out of the habit of writing. But Isabel, being a faithful little soul and hungry for affection, wrote with more or less regularity through all the years, often wistfully suggesting that her dear aunt arrange to spend her next vacation with her.

Miss Mallory's vacations, however, seemed to her much too rare and precious to bear secluding in a languishing New England town. She must, in justice to her Art—Miss Mallory mentally spelled it with a

capital—secure a flash of color and animation now and again at Atlantic City, Saratoga, or during several weeks at a Bohemian Camp in the Adirondacks with a few kindred spirits. So Isabel was permitted to wait hopefully on.

Now, after making this tardy decision to visit her niece, Miss Mallory dropped off to sleep with the comfortable feeling of doing just the right thing. She was surprised to find that she actually yearned for fresh milk and new-laid eggs and bed shortly after sundown—and Isabel.

On her arrival at Sunville she found her niece grown into a slim, pretty creature, with eyes as tenderly blue as newly-opened forget-me-nots, and a riotous mass of tawny hair. "Inspid," pronounced Miss Mallory at first sight of her, but later on she caught occasional hints of cool, quiet depths in the girl which caused her to suspend surface skimming and lower her line of investigation. Miss Mallory never failed to dredge up from the bottom of human nature what she could not grasp easily on the top, regardless of the discomfort to the nature dredged.

On the fourth morning following her arrival, as she sat chatting with Isabel and Mrs. Gentison in the library, Dr. Gentison, the widow's son, entered with his overcoat on his arm. He was an energetic-looking man, with sensitive gray eyes behind slightly smoked glasses, and a square, dogged chin, deeply cleft. His clever, lean, brown face gave the impression of a man upon whom the responsibilities of maturity had fallen early, at the expense of a normal, happy boyhood.

He handed the overcoat to Isabel with a preoccupied air and stood with right arm thrust out behind him waiting for her to adjust it for him.

Miss Mallory, watching the un-

conscious intimacy of the proceeding with quiet amusement, smiled broadly when Isabel finished with a soft, proprietary "There!"

Half an hour later, when the young girl sat beside her with a darning-basket, Miss Mallory pounced upon her quite suddenly with:

"Isabel Blair, you're in love with that man!"

"Aunt!" Isabel's gentle blue eyes opened wide in startled protest, while the clear pearliness of her skin deepened to a rosy pink under her aunt's cool scrutiny. "How *can* you?" she reproached.

"Very easily," returned Miss Mallory. "Take, for instance, that sock you are mending. It is Dr. Gentison's, beyond a doubt, but why don't you let his mother attend to it?"

"Because—her eyes are bad—and—besides—"

"You love doing it yourself," interposed her aunt triumphantly. "The air of consecration with which you accomplish it is unmistakable: You needn't tell *me*, my dear."

"I'm not telling you, Aunt," disclaimed Isabel, with a smile that began in derision and ended in disaster.

Miss Mallory reached forward and took the work out of the girl's fingers, which were trembling a little; then, lifting the girl's chin, she gazed deep into the startled young eyes.

"Why don't you marry him?" she asked boldly.

Isabel drew back and sat stiffly erect, struggling for composure; and when she spoke at last, her apparent distress had subsided into merely a little pulse that throbbed in the side of her neck.

"You have no right to speak so to me, Aunt Virginia," she said. "Arthur Gentison has been a good, kind brother to me ever since I can remember."

"Brother fiddlesticks!" snorted Miss Mallory.

"I have known no other," replied the girl quietly, "and, besides, he's nearly old enough to be my father. And as for loving him, as you say, even if I did, which I don't, I wouldn't admit I cared for a man unless I knew he cared for me. I don't think it would be—" she hesitated for a word—"womanly."

Miss Mallory threw back her head, and her pleasant laugh sounded through the house. "Really, Isabel," she said, wiping her eyes, "you are entirely too young to be twenty. You needn't look so lofty, child, nor blush so furiously. Don't you know that when the poor little ostrich buries her head in the sand she puts dust in nobody's eyes but her own?"

"But I'm not burying my head," defended the girl stoutly. "I don't need to."

"Nevertheless, any one under the same roof—save Mrs. Gentison, who's half blind, or the stupid dear himself—would know what I know. But there is nothing to be ashamed of, my child. It's no more shocking for a woman to be in love with a man, than for a man to be in love with a woman. Personally, I think it much more dignified for a woman to admit frankly that she loves a particular man and to start out openly to win him, than to stalk him in the creep-mousy fashion of some of your so-called 'nice girls.'" She stopped long enough to search the young face again before she continued:

"You are not the first girl, Isabel, who has lived in the same house with a man so long that he has grown to accept her along with the family plate. Stories built round that interesting problem come to the office every week or two. The difficulty, I notice, is always solved in one of two ways: the girl either throws herself at the man's head with such aimless precision that she completely bowls him over, and then drops her

flower-like face on his bosom, overcome with the sweet shame of her self-betrayal, or else she goes to him with some trumped-up story about the neighbor's saying it's improper for her—being she—and him—being he—to live longer under the same roof, because—and she generally breaks off there and leaves the rest to his imagination."

Isabel laughed so frankly at this that her aunt felt encouraged to go on:

"Now, here is Dr. Gentison, an eligible bachelor, so occupied with the ills of the world that marriage never occurs to him. All women, in consequence, appear to him merely as feminine specimens of the *genus homo* and interesting only in a pathological sense. I suppose he never notices what one has on, or how one's hair is fixed, or when one is looking particularly nice?"

"Never! Never!" exclaimed Isabel, with conviction.

"Exactly. Some men are like that." Miss Mallory paused a moment as if uncertain whether to continue, then plunged ahead impetuously. "I am very glad, after all, my dear, that your affections are not involved."

Isabel looked relieved. "Of course they couldn't be—with a middle-aged person like Arthur Gentison."

"Just how old is he?" asked the other curiously.

"Why he must be nearly as old as you, Aunt—thirty-five or thereabouts."

Miss Mallory accepted this with admirable fortitude. "Even at that," she replied, "he's scarcely decrepit; but, at any rate, I'm more than glad my first impressions were incorrect, although it makes a certain confession of my own a bit more difficult, because it's always difficult to confide in one whose experience is in

no wise similar. And yet"—she leaned over and picked off a thread from the girl's skirt—"I want to be perfectly frank with you, Isabel."

Isabel laid her hand timidly upon her aunt's knee. "Maybe—" she hesitated. "Oh, Aunt, maybe you mean to be married yourself!"

"Ah, but you think I'm too old," Miss Mallory reminded with a quizzical smile.

"But you don't *look* a bit old," reassured Isabel heartily.

"I'm forty," announced Miss Mallory grimly. "Forty! And what have I to show for it? Husks. Husks. I shall never attain the kernel of literary achievement. I feel it—and so—yes, Isabel, I mean to be married—if I can."

"I am so glad!" cried Isabel, impulsively slipping to the floor and laying her head upon her aunt's knee. "Tell me about it. Tell me. I will understand."

"There's little to tell, my dear, except that at your age I was obsessed, like your doctor, with the notion of being married to my profession. But with forty and gray hairs staring at me, I've come to believe there's more recompense in darning a man's socks. When I was a girl like you, Isabel, I deliberately threw away my chance of happiness, because the man I cared for was too proud to agree to my earning my own living in my own way. He wanted my heart and body and brain for himself—and his children; and so I sent him away, and another woman became the mother of his children, before I awakened to the fact that it is more worth-while to be mother of a good man's babies than author of a flimsy story-plot."

"I see perfectly," said Isabel softly, caressing her hand. "But now you've met some one else and are going to marry him and be very happy."

"Yes. It's a wise plan to strive

mightily to get what you want from life, and if you are denied in one direction, then turn all your energies towards something else, if you're sure you want it. And I'm convinced I do want it—him."

"Whom, Aunt?"

"Doctor Gentison."

Isabel got on her feet with a jerk and stood looking at her aunt in breathless incredulity. "Doctor Gentison? You? Oh, Aunt!"

"Sit down, my child, and don't look as if I had exploded all the canons of respectability. I am in reality quite a proper person, although, perhaps, not a prudish one. Doctor Gentison interests me more than I should have conceived possible. Beneath his preoccupied gravity, I believe a mere man is thumping away, clamoring for a feminine touch to release him. But a delicate touch will never do it, Isabel. I was convinced of that when I saw you help him on with his coat this morning. Nothing short of a jar will rouse him. That is why I have broached the subject to you. I wanted to start out fair and square—your touch against my jar. But now, of course, since your feelings are not involved, the situation becomes much less complicated."

Isabel continued to stare at her aunt with horror-stricken, fascinated eyes, but Miss Mallory, not in the least discomfited, sank back gracefully in her chair, bringing into prominence a remarkably pretty silken-clad foot and ankle. Isabel's gaze fastened on the foot, then traveled slowly over her aunt's person—her trim figure, her clear, wholesome skin, her intelligent brown eyes with little hair's-breadth wrinkles about them that showed only when she laughed—and suddenly it burst upon her that Virginia Mallory was not only a very attractive woman, but a very determined woman as well.

The knowledge brought her a little stab of pain which she closed her eyes to hide.

"You won't give me away, Isabel?" Miss Mallory caught the girl's shoulders lightly with both hands. "Isabel, you won't give me away?" Something in the tone and something in the provocative expression of the mouth convinced Isabel that her aunt was perfectly aware of the turmoil going on inside her and was decidedly amused at the performance.

A change passed over the girl's face—a shrinking, like the slowly folding petals of a sensitive plant when roughly handled. She made a hurried movement to leave the room, then, her chin held high, her eyes bright with suppressed tears, turned and looked steadily at her aunt.

"No, Aunt Virginia, I won't give you away. I'd be ashamed to."

The words were inscrutable—and so were Isabel's eyes.

Miss Mallory went up to her room and locked herself in. After making herself comfortable in a loose kimono, she sat relaxed before the open window, to think. When at last she rose and moved gracefully over to the little mahogany desk Isabel had removed from the parlor for her convenience, her eyes, too, were inscrutable, and her lips set. Taking up a plain sheet of paper, she laboriously printed upon it the following:

MY DEAR DOCTOR:

I wonder if you have at least one human attribute—curiosity. If not, I beg that you consign this note to the fire immediately.

You won't? Then, I am emboldened to proceed with your case. Did it ever strike you, you unenterprising savior of bodies, that you are neglecting a valuable professional asset by ignoring, as you do, the impulses and emotions of the human *beings*—not bodies—that you are thrown with? I know that your profession is everything with you, but I know, too, that you will never attain your full professional stature until you learn to look

for psychic correlatives in your physical diagnosis. You are totally unable to do this at present, because you are interested in symptoms rather than the people behind them. But believe me, the people are vastly more interesting, if you will only condescend to take a peep at them.

Are you interested to go on? Then wait until to-morrow.

This note she read over with much satisfaction, not so much at the choice of words as at the subtlety of the attack, the leading him on to professional ground before disclosing, even, that her weapons were feminine.

The next day the note she wrote was a shade less guarded.

Now that you have proved that your interest can be roused above the anatomical, I feel amazingly courageous. Dear me, there are so many things to say to you crowding my pen-point that I am quite bewildered. But when I recall your overwhelming unapproachableness, your graceless way of looking at a body and not seeing her, why I tremble at my temerity. I am trembling now. See how wabbly my printing has become? But I forgot. You never notice human weaknesses, except bodily ones. Oh, you poor man, there is so much a woman could teach you if she dared! Dare she? Tell me. If you do not scorn what I have written, wear to-morrow a purple tie. I shall see it. Be sure of that.

CANDIDA.

P.S.—"Candida" is not my real name.

On the following morning Miss Mallory and Isabel were finishing their breakfast when Doctor Gentison came in. He had been called twice during the night and his eyes were blood-shot, with bruised-looking marks beneath them, and his hands were unsteady, giving him the appearance of a sort of consecrated dissipation. After brief greetings to the two women, he sat down and unfolded his napkin with deliberation.

"I'll take my coffee black this morning, please, Isabel," he said, passing his cup.

Isabel, busy with the coffee-urn, looked up and fixed a curious stare upon his bosom.

"What a perfectly dreadful tie you are wearing, Arthur!" she commented.

"That?"—he squinted down at it. "It is rather a striking thing. Old rose, eh?"

"Old rose?" Isabel derided. "It's *purple*."

"Are you sure? Is it purple, Miss Mallory?"

"It's vociferous," she assured him, smiling. "A purple riot that heralds its approach from afar."

"I asked for purple, but I wanted to be sure," he confided, between hurried gulps of hot coffee. "No, nothing more, thank you. I must be off."

When he had left the room, Miss Mallory, for no apparent reason, laid her hand gently upon Isabel's, which remained quite passive under the caress. Miss Mallory sighed.

"You think me quite a sordid, scheming person, eh, Isabel?"

"I am trying not to think, Aunt Virginia. I wish you wouldn't remind me."

"You blame me, then, for trying to retrace my steps and wrest from life that which I was silly enough to renounce in my youth?"

Isabel pushed abruptly away from the table and stood with hand pressed against her throbbing bosom.

"Why do you speak of it to me? *Why?* Her lips quivered piteously. "Oh, Aunt, I thought you would be so different;" and she fled from the room.

During the following fortnight Miss Mallory seemed capable of producing or withholding the purple tie at will. Nor was this her only satisfaction. The Doctor's face had taken on an eager, expectant look, and he whistled blithely as he went in and out of the house, which so em-

boldened her that she decided, since her vacation was drawing to a close, to proceed more vigorously with her pen.

Do you know it's just two weeks since you became acquainted with me? On paper, I mean. There are other me's whom you know more or less intimately by sight, and other me's again whom you never dream of.

Man-alive! You are waking up, aren't you? I'm glad—glad! How do I know? Ah, that's my secret, along with another. No, I shall not tell you, and you could never guess, you dear, stupid owl! And yet, how gladly I would tell you if I dared. There is just one thing more fearful than having the courage of your convictions, and that is, not having it. I haven't quite the courage of mine. A woman's a woman for a' that. How I ramble on—but it's such a joy talking to you like this, through the key-hole. Would you like to peep? No. You haven't won the right—yet. But to-morrow I may give you a key—just a little one, which, with perseverance and instinct, may be made to unlock the door between you and

CANDIDA.

On the morrow she penned the key to him in this simple sentence:

"Thou art so near and yet so far."

CANDIDA.

P.S.—I shall not write again.

For a long time she sat looking at what she had written; then, quite suddenly, she stooped and kissed the page, and when she raised her face her eyes were full of tears and her cheeks were flushed like a girl's.

"How delicious her cake seems to a woman after she has thrown it away!" she said softly to herself as she stamped and sealed the missive.

She was pinning on her hat preparatory to mailing it when she heard Doctor Gentison ascend to his room.

Concealing the letter in the pages of a book, she slipped from the house to the nearest letter-box. But when she opened the book to mail the letter, it was not there. For a moment she stood transfixed, then she hur-

ried back, her eyes riveted on the ground. As she approached the house, a sudden conviction that she must have dropped the letter there, and that Isabel might spy it, caused her considerable discomfort, and the fact that she neither found it in the hall nor on the stair, nor in her room, added to her dismay. Then she heard the front door open and shut, and she stole noiselessly down to the first landing and ensconced herself behind a tall, old-fashioned clock which stood there. From this point of vantage, she could see through the archway which divided the hall from the living-room, and there, with his back turned, stood Doctor Gentison, reading her note. She watched him finally fold it carefully and put it in his pocket, and then he laughed, a low, rapturous laugh, thrilled through with exultation.

The sheer joy of the laugh brought Isabel from the room beyond, where she had been quietly reading a book.

"Oh, it's you," she said in a tone intended to convey the impression that she had expected something more worth-while. She started to withdraw, but he halted her.

"Isabel! Come here."

She walked reluctantly to within a few feet of him. "Well?" she asked, raising her eyes to his.

"Come *here*." He tapped the floor with his foot.

She hesitated an instant, then walked straight up to him and stood with her hands behind her. "What do you wish, Arthur?" she asked soberly.

He laughed again in exultation and laid his hands upon her shoulders. "I wished to make you come the rest of the way," he said.

"The rest of what way?" she asked, trying to shrug her shoulders free from his grasp.

"Isabel, Isabel, you precious

rogue!" he shook her gently. "You demure kitten, I've caught you fairly at last. I've known almost from the very first. I suppose I'd have guessed sooner, if I hadn't been a dunce."

"Guessed what, Arthur?"

He did not answer, but stood looking down at her so steadily that the blood crimsoned her clear, white skin, and she turned her head away.

"Look at me, Isabel. Don't be ashamed. Don't pretend that it isn't true. Do you think that because I've been a blundering mole for years I couldn't feel the source of the sunlight when it fell upon me?"

Her white lids trembled, then lifted with difficulty, as if conscious of the weight of his gaze, but the eyes she raised to his were steadfast as she faltered:

"You have been told—you have found out that I—that I—care for you?"

"I mean that *you* have found out that I care for you," he corrected softly. "That I love you—adore you."

"You?" she stammered. "You? Wait!"—as he endeavored to draw her into his arms.

He seemed puzzled for a moment, then his face cleared. "'Thou art so near and yet so far.' I had forgotten. Now, may I?" He bent towards her, but she stayed him with her hand and gazed up at him with the pleading look of a little child.

"You see," she said, with a little catch, "I'm so terribly happy right now I can't bear any more just yet. It's all so new and unexpected."

"Unexpected?" The puzzled look returned to his face. "But, Isabel, darling, you must have known when you gave me the key that sooner or later I would use it."

"Key?" she repeated blankly.

"Yes, key. 'Thou art so near and yet so far'—in your note."

"My note? What note, Arthur?"

He gave her a look of reluctant admiration. "You cunning witch, I'd like to shake you! What note? This note, Madam, and this and this." He pulled half a dozen square envelopes from his pocket and thrust them into her hands.

She read them one by one very slowly, growing whiter with each.

"I did not write them," she quavered at last, huskily.

"But, Isabel," he protested with a frown of half displeasure, "I picked that last one up on the stair just now. You must——"

She laid her hand on his arm. "Listen, Arthur. If you can believe in your heart that I wrote those notes, then"—she paused for a moment, then went bravely on—"I am not the woman you love."

He caught her hand and held it against his breast. "You are the only woman," he said vehemently. "There has never been any one else. There never will be any one else. I don't care whether you wrote the notes or not."

"But I care," she replied, withdrawing her hand. "Everything depends upon it. I must be Isabel Blair to you, or nothing. If you can believe I wrote those notes, I am not Isabel Blair to you. Don't you see?"

"Of course, they never seemed quite like you, Isabel, but, then, if you didn't write them——"

"If?"—her eyes flashed. "I'll have no if's, Arthur. *I-did-not-write-them.*"

"Well, then, since you didn't, who did? Who wrote them, Isabel?"

Before she could answer, there was a slight commotion on the stair, and Miss Mallory descended upon them, laughing, with outstretched hands.

"Let me answer him, Isabel, you precious goose!" she cried, throwing her arm about the young girl's waist.

"I was coming downstairs, and couldn't help hearing what was going on between you. I wrote the letters, Doctor."

"You?" he cried, aghast.

"Rather a daring liberty I took with you both, I'll admit, but the ends justified the means. I just couldn't bear seeing you two stupid owls travelling about in the same circle and never catching up with each other, when it required only a friendly push to send you in the right direction. Can you forgive me?" She held out her hand to him. He grasped it eagerly.

"Forgive you?" he cried. "Miss Mallory, I'm the most grateful fellow on earth. 'I had eyes and saw not'—you know how it goes. I can't find words to thank you enough."

"You don't need to. I thoroughly enjoyed doing it. And now, since my mission is ended, you must excuse me, both of you, while I pack my trunk."

"What? You're not leaving just when we are all getting acquainted?" protested the Doctor.

Before answering, she glanced swiftly at her niece, then all her aplomb deserted her, and her face and figure relaxed into lines of premature middle-age.

"Yes—yes," she stammered hurriedly. "I must go. A telegram came this morning from my people, suggesting that I return to my desk at once. A woman of my age, you know, can't afford to leave her cupboard too long, or she'll find it bare, like Mother Hubbard. Besides"—her arm fell from Isabel's waist; she looked very tired, and her eyes were hungry. "Besides, I don't think Isabel has forgiven me for meddling. Have you, my dear?"

A look of compunction swept Isabel's face. "I don't mean to be unkind, Aunt," she said, offering her hand in a constrained manner.

Miss Mallory held it awkwardly for a moment.

"I did what I could—as I could," she said, and as she turned to leave them, added, "You know, beggars can't be choosers."

Isabel looked after her uncertainly for a moment, then rushed up the

stairs, her constraint utterly gone.

"But, Aunt," she whispered, halting her upon the stair-landing, "you said you wanted him yourself."

Miss Mallory smiled inscrutably and patted the girl's cheek.

"I said I wanted him, and I did—for you, Isabel."



NATIVITY

BY CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS

NOT only far away and long ago,
With wondering joy and prescience of woe,
Came God to man on that transfiguring morn,
But now, but now, with wordless ecstasy,
Yet trembling for a grief that is to be,
In every mother's bosom Christ is born.

THE BLOT ON THE 'SCUTCHEON

BY MARY BRECHT PULVER

BACK in New England's witch-burning days, one of John Stannard's ancestors, Miles Bradford by name, was convicted of ameliorating the sufferings of one of the witches, by a mercifully smuggled cup of cold water. Tradition fails to state whether said witch was young and pretty, but it relates that the colony scapegrace, having expiated his crime in approved fashion, took to his heels to the woods, to live in ungodly manner to the end of his days, and serve ever after as a shocking blemish in the otherwise fair fabric of Stannard's ancestry.

Miles Bradford's family, of course, repudiated him, and continued to rear its young scions to an appropriate horror of things non-Puritan—especially of the feminine gender. But a sport on the ancestral tree may eventually bear fruit despite pruning.

At twenty-six, John Stannard, the present-day Puritan, apparently all that the most conventional of his family could wish, found himself, a little contemptuous, pursuing the elusive dollar in New York.

By day he wrote up statistics for a publishing company that was bringing out a book on eugenics. By night he reposed in the third-floor front of a third-rate boarding-house, where, if a reliable though microscopic income, a superbly enfoliated family-tree, and a New England conscience are any kind of soporific, his dreams were peaceful.

A woman would have called Stannard good-looking, in a collected and

well-groomed fashion—if he had let her look at him long enough. But woman interested him little—least of all here in New York, where she violated so many of his ideals.

His wife was already selected—a distant cousin, Elnora Bradford, a fine, large, blonde type, whose picture stood on his dresser, and who shared his background and traditions; who owned also the family-seat, a big, four-square white house up in New England, with green blinds, a tall hedge, and peacocks on its lawn. In time, when he had won his spurs, he would ask her to marry him, as their family expected. And it was very suitable and pleasing to Stannard, though the thought never interfered with his blood pressure.

He was, of course, aware that there were other lodgers in the house. He passed them frequently going in and out, but for any interest he felt they might have been shadows.

One evening, because of this indifference, he ran squarely into one on the third stairway. It was a petticoated shadow—a woman who roomed down at the end of his hall. He had an impression that the room was very small.

It need not have been large for the comfort of the slim little creature with whom he collided. She was in the half-dark, but he realized her smallness with a start of compunction, and apologized becomingly.

She thanked him, lifting her eyes to his with a little smile. The hall light fell on her face, and a sudden disgust seized John Stannard. A

moment before she had been a shabby, childish little figure he had blundered into in the dark; now he saw only one thing—not the beautiful soft eyes that suddenly read his expression, nor the thinness of the young cheeks, but the paint—the paint on them! All that was Puritan in him rose up and revolted from her. He chewed off his apology abruptly and hurried on.

The girl went on to her room. Stannard's impression had been correct. It was a small room—small and exclusive. She went to her mirror and stared into it a full minute—at her garish face and pencilled eyelids. Then she laughed—a half-sneering little laugh, a little tired and dreary, yet having in it an unspoiled undertone that suggested many things not found in city boarding-houses—bird-notes or a busy little brook, for instance.

She poured some water into her hand-basin and washed her face hastily. It came out in all its truth—too thin, too white, with real violet shadows under the eyes. She considered it, head on one side.

"I agree with you, Mr. Owl—*heartily*. But, you see, it won't do—not in my business. A death's head isn't a hit;" and she laughed again, a good-natured laugh this time, quite as though she found herself amusing. Then she carefully "made-up" afresh.

John Stannard came down with the grippe next day, and for a full week had his own reflections for company. It was a dreary week. On the second day Mrs. Downey, coming up with fresh towels, paused in her ministrings to grumble out her troubles. It seemed it was going "all over"—this grippe business. Girl down the hall had it quite bad—worse'n he had, a whole lot. If she didn't improve by to-morrow, it would be the hospital for hers.

Stannard chafed under all this information. Surely it was not his affair whether the painted Jezebel down the hall went to the hospital or not. He had his own woes to think of.

Coming presently into a white and shaken convalescence, he was unwillingly aware that his fellow-lodger was also apparently recovering. He had half-glimpses at times of a little dressing-gowned figure slipping through the dark hall from the bath; and once on a sunny morning he quite involuntarily got a peep into her room. She was sitting cross-legged on her bed, in a very red kimona that exactly matched a blooming geranium on the window-sill. Her head was bent above some work she was doing, and he could not see her face, but he told himself dryly that its coloring probably matched the kimona—she would see to that.

He heard her coughing sometimes on still afternoons—quite rackingly. Once it was so bad he started up impatiently, with some crude, unfounded notion of stopping her—whether by proffer of assistance or by rebuke, he didn't quite know. But, listening to it and remembering the slightness of her, he marveled that it did not destroy her.

To restore his poise, he sat down and wrote to Elnora. At this hour she was very likely drawing tea for Aunt Caroline and herself by the sitting-room fire. A cosy picture. Ah, well, some day— He wrote briskly, busily, to drown out the sound of that pathetic coughing down the hall.

When he was well, he attacked that eugenics matter with renewed energy. It was a matter with which he was heartily in accord—his projected marriage could certainly raise no slightest ripple on his conscience. As for the little, painted creature on his floor, he thought no more about

her, save idly sometimes as he saw a thread of light under her door, or heard her dreary coughing in the night.

Then, coming home one day at noon unexpectedly, he found her at the stair-head, drooping helpless against the wall in a paroxysm that racked her utterly. A sudden compassion welled into John Stannard's heart as he saw her fragile shoulders shake.

"I—I'm afraid you are very ill," he said gravely.

Her coughing stopped gradually, and she looked up with tear-blinded eyes. She was paintless now; and he saw how white and ravaged she was.

"I'm just—getting—well," she said huskily. "*Getting well*," she repeated more firmly.

"One must be careful," said John inanely, "in convalescence."

A little smile flickered into her eyes.

"*This one must*," she conceded dryly; then, as though reading the pity of his eyes, she put up a hand before her colorless face and turned away.

"If there is anything I could possibly do——" ventured Stannard, on a wholly unaccountable impulse.

She faced him like a little whirlwind, her face all a-sparkle.

"Oh, there is, there is," she cried, "if you only would! I've—I've often almost asked you through Mrs. Downey—while you were shut up in the house. It would have been very dreadful, of course—but not so dreadful as the loneliness. Oh, you can't *know*—what *weeks* of it are like—and you keep hoping—and hoping——" Her voice shook oddly, then she steadied it with a soft little laugh. "What I mean is—would you come in to see me?"

A sudden embarrassment came upon Stannard. He felt a decided

distaste with the idea, however disarming and harmless she might seem.

"I am sorry you have been lonely," he said quietly. "Perhaps you would like some reading matter. I'll stop at your door with some magazines this evening." Then he went on with a formal little bow.

Yet when night came, and he took his offering to her door, he found himself quite unaccountably entering the tiny room and seating himself on the little couch-bed, with its couple of gay pillows and worn Bagdad cover.

His hostess occupied the single chair—a big rocker—a soft pillow behind her head. She apologized for this selfishness duly, but Stannard guessed accurately that she was taxing her strength merely to sit up.

"The doctor," she laughed, "will have me baby myself. He thinks I must be *so* careful. Nonsense! I've had these spells before. I'll soon be out again—I've got to, any way. I must get to work."

He found himself suddenly admiring the fighting pluck that vitalized her. She was so small, and, except for that one blemish of make-up, so feminine, it seemed unfair that she should have to do battle. He looked at her hands—finely shaped hands, with their telltale record of sickness; at the soft, dark hair that curled naturally around her face; then back at her make-up. There was a glaring discrepancy about the thing.

"You—you perhaps had better go home," he suggested lamely.

"If I *could*!" she breathed, her eyes softening. "But, you see, there isn't any 'home'—except this"—she glanced about the little room, then laughed and shrugged—"and there won't be this if I can't get out *soon*."

"You mustn't be pessimistic, Miss——" Stannard faltered. He hadn't meant to betray any interest in her name.

"To the profession, Marie Desbrough; to my friends—when I can afford 'em—Molly Miller," she supplied, with her whimsical laugh.

Stannard glowered. *Exactly* what he might have expected.

"So you are on the stage?" he said sternly.

"*Was* on the stage, to be exact. In the chorus. *This* has cost me my place. Company went out on the road yesterday—you may have heard of it—'The Belles of Paris'—magnificent scenic effects—pretty show-girls—song hits of the season—popular prices—a banquet for the Tired Business Man—fresh from New York—that sort of thing. Very effective, I assure you."

She watched him mischievously from under her lashes. Stannard's frown deepened.

"And you like it?"

She shrugged.

"Like it?" she repeated, with a little rueful smile. "'One does what one can, monsieur.' *Like it!*" she scorned suddenly.

"But you keep at it——"

"Yes, I'll keep at it—if I can. I have my doubts. I can't act a bit; and I'm too thin for the front row now."

Stannard winced.

"And without my war-paint"—she laid a finger on her cheek—"when I see myself without this, I shouldn't blame any manager for calling the dog—if I were foolish enough to let him catch me without it. Why, it keeps up my own courage, so I daren't rub it off."

"I see," said John gravely; "but—er—do you think it's a very satisfactory substitute?"

She looked a little wistful.

"No, it's pretty poor, I guess. All right for the managers, but nothing between the acts. But I hate the way I look—and I used to be pink—I used to wear real 'country pinks,'"

Stannard smiled.

"And you would again if you had a chance. Why not try something else?"

She shook her head.

"I have. Went through normal school with what was left me and tried teaching—Mother was a teacher. But the chalk dust got my throat. Beastly throat I have—chases me off everything. So I gave that up and tried library work, and day-governess work, and the stores, and finally the chorus. And I'm a *great* success, as usual"—she laughed a little forlornly. "I've had two whole engagements. But I guess there's only Minnesota left."

"Minnesota?" asked John.

"Yes," nodded Molly. "Sounds horrible, doesn't it? My Aunt Winnie lives out there—and she's a dear old thing, too. Any time I'm ready, she'll send me carfare and have me out with her to live. It's a wheat-farm she lives on—miles from anywhere—and her husband—he's her second—is a Swede with a kind heart. I've never seen him, but he probably eats with his knife, and says, 'Skoll I help you to more herrings?'—and there *may*," she added impressively, "be *wolves*, for anything I know."

Stannard relaxed into laughter.

"I don't blame you for hesitating."

Molly began to cough. "I'm talking too much. It's your turn, anyhow, Mr. Stannard—you see, I know *your* name."

So very shortly John found himself, quite oddly, giving an account of himself—a light, sketchy account that touched briefly on matters Bostonian, and the Bradford and Stannard families, and Harvard—Molly's eyes grew round and admiring here—and lastly on the publishing house and that work on eugenics.

Molly listened, fascinated, her head tilted on one side. Yet when

he finished she breathed a little regretful sigh.

"It—it sounds just beautiful—like a chapter from a best-seller, Mr. Stannard; and I'm awfully glad you've told me. Yet—do you know?—I hate to part with Mrs. Downey's version—*there's* a woman with imagination. You should have heard her translation of you," she laughed. "You see, I've *got* to gossip with some one, if only a poor but honest landlady."

John smiled, then suddenly pulled out his watch. More than an hour had slipped away, and he rose in consternation. But Molly's pleading eyes caught him.

"Oh," she said tremulously, "you don't know what it's meant—having you come in and talk to me."

"Why," said Stannard, with another of his unnatural impulses, "I'll come again—if I may." And he looked down quite softened toward the little figure in the big chair.

Back in his own room, it struck him with a peculiar sense of bigness and bareness.

"It is lonely," he announced, as one making a discovery. "I've been too busy to know it. I probably need some companionship myself."

Yet as he untied his cravat he cautioned himself that one must not be too precipitate. Advances of the most innocent kind, especially in New York, were so likely to be misunderstood.

Nevertheless, on the Saturday following he dropped in at Molly's door again. He had a bottle of wine with him—some of Aunt Caroline's dandelion, with which she had insisted on stocking him against the rigors of the New York climate. Molly rippled with grateful happiness over it. She was not so well to-night, and was wrapped in her red kimona and a big white shawl. Her cheeks were even redder than usual, and she

called his attention to them with frank pleasure.

"I've left off the paint these last few days. I'm not needing it any more—I get a beautiful color every evening now. Dr. Watcomb says it's not a good sign. He thinks I ought to give up and go away, but—I'm still fighting." She laughed.

"You're very brave," said John, with admiration in his voice.

"Fudge!" she jeered contemptuously.

He stayed quite a while that evening. It was his pleasure, for one thing, to enlighten her more fully on his Colonial background—a subject that always these days gave him certain pleasing titillations.

Molly listened most delightfully. For, as she said with humility, she hadn't an ancestor to her name—"any one of the name of Miller, you know"—and she positively gloried in them—other people's.

"But what I'm wondering, Mr. Stannard," she said innocently, "is—just who *were* the Pilgrim Fathers?"

"Who *were* they?" repeated John dazedly. "Why, they were the founders—the Colonial founders;" and he started patiently to explain.

"But no," she interrupted, with a touch of impatience; "I didn't mean that—I know *American* history. What I meant is, who *were* the founders before there was any colony to found? Weren't they rather—*nobodies*? I've heard that hinted—"

John's senses nearly forsook him. He had never heard such a thing discussed—one never went behind the back-drop. Great heavens, was any prying, vulgarly-born wench to rend with vandal hands the sacred veil that draped the altars of his family gods? He felt he ought to fly into a dudgeon. It was outrageous! However, he controlled himself and

with wounded dignity led her to more stable ground.

He told her about that four-square white house up in New England, with its tall hedges and insolent peacocks, and about the fat pony which Elnora drove on her charitable missions. He promised he'd show her some snapshots of them next time.

And when he went back to his room it was bigger and emptier than ever.

He took the pictures, as he had promised, and she looked them over delighted. The very last one was Elnora's—which he had added for some vague, undefined reason. He had a slightly uncomfortable feeling that she ought to *know*. Yet when Elnora's face turned up he found no words to introduce her as his future wife. Only Molly's quick intuition helped him.

"And this is—the girl," she breathed, studying it. "I knew all along there was one. Isn't she lovely!—isn't she beautiful!"

Stannard agreed. He had never noticed especially, but of course Elnora was inevitably all of these things.

"And she lives in that lovely old house, and drives the fat pony, and knows what *home* means, lucky girl!" envied Molly. "You'll be awfully happy." She smiled into his eyes.

John felt it quite possible; but at the moment Elnora bored him a little. It *wasn't* quite fair that she should be so big and healthy and protected and comfortable, through no virtue of her own, while other people— He had one of his strange impulses.

"Perhaps," he suggested—"I know Elnora would like it—she's very kind, always—perhaps we could arrange for you to know Elnora, and to visit that 'lovely old house,' when spring comes."

"How *sweet* you are!" said Molly

fervently. "But it wouldn't do." She shook her head. "We wouldn't get along. The Puritan and the Chorus Lady! No, we wouldn't fit—we're too different. You see, she's your kind."

It was this remark that stuck in John's consciousness like a barb. He could not gainsay it; yet it wasn't exactly necessary, he reflected disagreeably, to rub it in like that.

In the next ten days he went to see Molly very often. And always he found her propped among her pillows, making her pitiful pretense at convalescence.

"Dr. Watcomb's taken to calling me names," she laughed, "beautiful names—and I guess he isn't far wrong. He says I'll never get well here; that I have all kinds of chance if I go away—go where there's oxygen, and the sun shines, and there's good food. He says I'm too young to go out, and that I've got a perfectly bully constitution."

"Why don't you obey him?" asked John, with an odd sense of oppression at his heart.

She smiled.

"Oh, I'll go—after a while. But I've got to go through the formality of deciding."

He tried to cheer her—not hard while actually with her, though he suspected the dark despondency of her lonely hours. He had half a mind to write to Elnora about her and get some advice. But he thought better of it.

When he paid his calls he took her some trifle—a book, a magazine, grapes, flowers—always of vivid color, for somehow he realized that the bright hues were her favorites. Once he stumbled on a bunch of old-fashioned "pinks," running the gamut of all the reds from blush to deep maroon. She cried out joyfully and pressed them against her hectic cheeks, and John, watching, had a

strange, moving pity at his heart that he did not understand—as though his heart were coming alive and climbing out of his chest.

He told her much about his work and himself on these visits. Somehow these brief hours in the bright glow of her little room, with Molly's vivid face reflecting every changeable mood, lent a peculiar savor to the precise routine of his days. He found a keen pleasure in listening to her comments, in waiting for the gallant, ready little laugh with its bird-notes. But when two weeks had passed, quite suddenly it ended.

In the first place, the book on eugenics got itself finished quite nicely, and there wasn't anything more to be done for the publishing company. And right on top, like thunder following lightning, came a letter from Cleverbridge & Mason of Boston, offering him a long-sought place with them at double his present earnings.

So, you see, it was the end of noisy Gotham and the beginning of the real things. For this was the first step in the ladder that climbed to his eventual dream. It led to everything he'd always counted on: Boston, and the shelter of the family tree—and Elnora. He tallied it all off quite carefully, then he went to tell Molly. She'd rejoice at his good fortune, poor little thing. Somehow, he himself felt very little like it.

He found her all white and gone-to-pieces in her chair.

"I've—I've just had a telegram from Aunt Winnie. I've given up, and I'm going out to Uncle Ole Larsen and the wheat-fields and the wolves." She tried to laugh, but he saw the tears on her lashes. "I'm going Monday."

"Monday!" cried John, with sudden consternation. "But I'm not going until Thursday."

"Oh!" she cried, startled. "So you are going, too?"

John told her—he might have been describing the demise of all his friends. Molly paled, then sparkled bravely.

"It's lovely!" she cried. "Lovely! Oh, you'll be so happy! And you deserve it. You've been so good to me! I—I wish I could ever tell you——"

John felt he could bear no more. He'd had no idea he was going to feel this way. He got up abruptly to say good-by. And there, looking down into her wistful eyes and little white face, he felt a mist coming before his eyes, a strange throbbing at his heart, a wild, primal impulse of defiance possessing him. He looked as no respectable Puritan ever looked—perhaps as one of the ancient cave-dwellers let himself on occasion. He towered over Molly. She rose, half-swaying, and faced him with white lips. In common with all her sisters, she needed no key to the cave-man's language.

"Oh!" she cried, and her voice sounded shrill and thin. "Think of all you're going to have! Think how you've always wanted this—think of Elnora—think of the house—and the pony—and the peacocks—think of Elnora," she repeated piteously.

He made an inarticulate sound.

"Don't say anything," she begged passionately. "Don't say anything. Think of Elnora—and the Pilgrims. Think of your family." She half sobbed.

It was like a dash of cold water in his face. He pulled himself out of his madness.

"Good-by," he said almost sternly.

She put her hand behind her.

"Good-by," she faltered faintly, "and—God bless——"

He did not hear her. He was finding the door. Perhaps if he had looked back—at her face—— But he did not; he went out quietly. And Molly dropped back into her chair.

He was on the top step when he heard it. At first he thought she was coughing; then he *knew*, and the madness came back.

A minute later he was kneeling by the big chair, his arms around the little, sobbing figure.

"Molly, Molly," he murmured, "I've come back. I cannot leave you, you little, little thing!"

She thrust him from her sternly.

"You must—there's Elnora."

"Elnora!" he scorned. "She loves me as much as she does the town pump, and I—I only found out now—I love *you*, Molly. Oh, Molly—"

"You mustn't love me," wept Molly. "It's not according to eugenics."

"It will be," he vowed. "I'll see that it is. You're going to have

everything you need—and not in Minnesota. Oh, little Molly, what a blind ass, what a fool, I've been!"

"I have no ancestors," wailed Molly.

John Stannard turned poet.

"How could you have, when you're made of thistledown and sunshine and a sweet May morning?" He kissed her thin little hands.

"Tell me," he said, "do you love *me*, Molly?"

She could not answer, except with her eyes.

In such a voice might an explorer have saluted the new-found Pole.

And so that was the end—or the beginning of the "throw-back," if you like. Evidently, in spite of all hereditary strait-jackets, that long-buried Bradford came into his own.



ALCHEMY

BY SARA TEASDALE

I LIFT my heart as spring lifts up
A yellow daisy to the rain.
My heart shall be a lovely cup
Altho' it holds but pain.

For I shall learn from flower and leaf
That color every drop they hold,
To change the lifeless wine of grief
To living gold.

ON THE TURN OF THE COIN

BY E. LAWRENCE DUDLEY

IT was noon when Philip Dahlgren gained the crest of the hill, and, pulling up his horse beside a clump of bushes, stared down into the shallow valley before him. He had been riding for hours, and his trousers and his officer's jacket, and even the three days' stubble of beard on his chin, were caked with dirt. As he paused, the dust clouds, rising on the hot wind behind him, powdered his back and the flanks of his horse, and drifted out again, lazily, into the sunlit reaches of the road beyond.

Hidden somewhere below was the man he was hunting. But it was not of the man that he was thinking now. It was of the valley itself, and of the boyhood he had spent there—and left there forever, in the care of the little mother who had given him to his country. And now she was gone, and their house was in ruins and their lands a wilderness. And all because men had differed in opinion, and had decreed that there should be war; and he had chosen the side which he had believed was right, and had been called a traitor by his neighbors.

His glance, shifting down the road, instinctively sought the broad façade of the first house beyond; and its white columned portico, rising against the fresh green of the trees, seemed to stare back at him with an insolent contempt. Yes; those who lived there had been his neighbors—once. And there had been a time when that house was as much his home as his own, and its daughter even dearer to him than his mother. But that was when war was still in the making; and before young Lan-

ier, fresh from college and town, had laid claim to the favor which Dahlgren had believed was his, and they had quarreled; and Dahlgren had challenged and fought young Lanier over a fancied insult.

It had been a farce, that duel—a cruel farce. They had met at day-break, in the three-cornered field by the ford, and the gurgling of the brook, the sleepy calls of the birds, the loud wrangling of the seconds as they had come to their absurd decision to toss for shots, were still inextricably mingled in Dahlgren's ears. He recalled the triumphant leer on his opponent's face when the turn of the coin had given him the preference, and the look of baffled rage when he had fired and missed. And the savage joy of mastery had leaped in his own breast as he had acknowledged the shot and levelled his weapon to return it. . . . And it was then that she had run out from the bushes—a slim figure in white—and with a cry of horror had torn the gun from him.

He could still see her face, pale with scorn and contempt, as she had upbraided him, called him a coward, a bully, and before all those present had kissed young Lanier on the lips. He could still hear the titter of the seconds as he had swung on his heel, and, half-blinded with shame and wrath, had left the field to his rival. And by that night the whole countryside had been told the tale; and men had smiled as he passed them, and pointed him out as one who had been tricked and flouted by a woman.

This had been over five years ago; but the memory of it had lost none

of its bitterness. And as he gathered up his reins the grim smile died on his lips, and the square lines of his jaw grew fixed and determined. He was on his country's business now—the tracking down of a spy. But there would be a time when he would come back to settle his own private differences. And for this, and for his ravaged fields, he would hold the valley accountable.

He drew the reins tight, and, turning in his saddle, looked over his shoulder. The road behind, stretching like a dusty thread into the distance, lay deserted in the sunlight. He nodded his satisfaction. His men were following his instructions well, keeping to the cover of the woodland as they closed in on the valley. Within an hour they should be at the ford. And if their quarry had not then been caught, it would be an easy matter to drive him before them through the westward gap and into the closely patrolled lands beyond.

The success of the campaign lay in the capture of this elusive, mysterious personage who for three months had stolen plans, intercepted dispatches, learned the inmost secrets of the army's heart, and had transmitted them, one and all, to the enemy. A civilian, high in the enemy's councils, said some, a soldier, others, and pointed to the crescent-shaped scar on his cheek—the sole clue to his identity—in confirmation; but, soldier or civilian, they were all agreed that he had the ingenuity of the devil. Well, it would tax the ingenuity of the devil to break through the meshes of a net like this. . . .

Again Dahlgren nodded, and, touching his horse's flank, urged him into a gallop. It was a ten-minute ride to the ford; and there he would pick up the trooper whom he had sent ahead to reconnoiter. . .

He caught a glimpse of dusty hedge-rows, and of the line of sycamore trees standing behind them, and then, as the road dipped toward the house beyond, and the broad vista of lawns opened out before him, something tiny and white toddled suddenly into his path, and stumbled and fell; and through the swirl of dust a child's rosy face laughed up at him.

He tried vainly to halt, to turn, and then, with a choking cry, leaned swiftly from his saddle and plucked the child from under the horse's feet.

"My God!" he gasped, and found himself shuddering as he pulled the horse suddenly to a halt and stared at the crumpled bundle in his arms. "Hurt, sissy?" he asked anxiously after a moment.

"Ain't sissy," the bundle retorted, and with a gurgle of delight flung itself on the horse's neck. "Likes horsey," it asserted. "Wants for to take a ride."

Dahlgren's mouth twitched as he recaptured the child awkwardly. "Very well," he agreed. "Suppose I take you home."

"Don't wants to go home. Wants to go ridin'—like Daddy," the child insisted, and made an unsuccessful plunge at the reins.

"Who is your Daddy?"

"Who?" The boy looked up blankly; and then, his eyes suddenly glistening, "Buttons!" he exclaimed, and, grabbing at the officer's jacket, lurched unsteadily to his feet. "Daddy got buttons, too." And a chubby hand, reaching up, wrapped itself lovingly over the topmost button of Dahlgren's coat.

The man's arm tightened about the round little body. "So Daddy's a soldier, is he? Well, where does he live?"

But there was no need of an answer. He saw the woman even as he spoke. With a quick intake of his breath, he stared at her as she ran

toward them across the lawn, then stiffening rigidly, turned away his head. It was only what he should have suspected; but for some reason even the possibility of it had escaped him; and in the grip of surprise he felt curiously confused and helpless.

Meanwhile, the boy, hauling himself up by the button, was clawing at his ear in a desperate endeavor to get at his cap. This, at least, he could stop, and, lifting his arm to do so, revealed his face to the woman.

She halted on the edge of the lawn, and with her hands at her breast gave a little cry.

"You!" she exclaimed. "You here!"

He nodded slowly. "The boy was in the road before I noticed him——"

"I know. I saw it all from the house—all but the—your picking him up. I thought he was crushed." The agony of the memory swept across her face as she repressed a shiver. "It was wonderful," she said simply.

"You taught me the trick yourself," he answered, and stopped.

It was no time now to evoke the past; there was too much in it which could only be painful to both of them. Yet her smile, as she glanced up, was entirely frank and straightforward.

"You mean on Peter, the pony? He's still living, you know. He belongs to Vic now—*this* Vic. Doesn't he, pet?"

She had come to his side, and, catching the boy's hand in her own, pressed her lips lovingly against it. A half-satirical, half-wistful look flickered in the man's eyes as he gazed down at her. There had been a thousand times in the old days when she had come out to him like this, and had stood by his horse, and talked—and even held his hand as she was holding the boy's now.

But they were young then, and alone, with no child between them. . . .

And of a sudden he realized that the child *was* between them—an eternal barrier; and the look in his eyes died as the thought of young Lanier clutched again at his heart.

The woman, raising her face, was scrutinizing him closely. "You've not been home since—since your mother died."

He shook his head.

"We did what we could——"

"We?" he interrupted. "You mean . . . ?"

"Aunt Jane and I. We went over every day while she was ill. She was calling for you—at the end. It—it was very pitiful."

"Yes," he assented, and, turning his gaze from her, stared at the blue haze of hills beyond the gap.

Her hand, hovering over his, rested on it lightly. "Poor Philip!" she murmured.

The warm pressure of her fingers sent a thrill through his arm; but he steeled himself against it. This was no time for sentiment. He owed her something for her kindness to his mother; but for the duel—for the way she had flouted him—there was no forgiveness.

He drew his hand away almost roughly. "I must be getting on," he said.

"You will not come up to the house?"

"I can't."

"But they will be so disappointed," she persisted. "Father and Aunt Jane——"

"And Victor?" The words rose to his lips before he could stop them. But she had seen his smile and the sarcasm in it, and drew herself up stiffly.

"And Victor above all," she returned, "if he were home. But he left this morning. . . . He's a soldier, like you," she added with

pride; then, pausing suddenly, stared at his jacket, as though she had just realized what the color of his uniform meant. "One of your men rode by several hours ago," she stated abruptly.

He nodded. "I sent him ahead."

"On business?"

"On a—mission."

"I see. Then, you are not staying in the valley?"

"No; only passing through—on my way to the west."

"On this same—mission?"

"Yes."

Her glance dropped from his; and for a moment she stood with bowed head, pondering. And as he looked at her, a sudden fierce desire to snatch her up in his arms and gallop away with her seized him. She had been created for him—she was his by every right. And in that instant of passion he could have killed Lanier—throttled him as one would throttle the meanest thief. . . .

The surge of emotion ebbed; and he was conscious of her eyes again, wide now, and misty with appeal. And when she spoke a note of pleading was vibrant in her voice:

"That morning at the ford, Philip—"

"Please!"

"But I must—I *must* speak of it. I can't ask you to forget—what happened—it can't be forgotten. But I do ask you to believe that Victor had no hand in it. Whatever was done I did myself—without his knowledge. . . . You will believe this, Philip? You *will* believe it, and remember it—always?"

She halted; and as he turned to her he felt her glance searching his face as though for some sign of assent. But the old sense of reserve had come back to him; and he met her look squarely, challenging her scrutiny with his own.

"What difference does it make?"

he demanded, "what I believe? The past is fixed, unalterable. Nothing can change it."

"But that's not the point," she insisted vehemently. "Don't you see—"

"It's the only point that matters," he declared, and, bending over the boy, who had possessed himself of the reins, drew them from his protesting fingers.

She noted the action and what it signified, and with a little gasping breath leaned toward him.

"But if I swear . . . ?"

"Why should you?" he cut in. "I believe what I've seen—and know. And that's all you can expect of me." And, lifting the boy from the saddle, he reached him down to her.

She would have spoken again. But there was something in his glance which withheld her; and she fell back slowly, clutching the child to her breast.

He raised his hand in salute. "Good-by," he said; and as he put the spurs to his horse he was once more conscious of her eyes, half-piteous, half-desperate, and with a strange haunting fear rising in them.

Where the road swung down in a broad sweeping curve to the ford, Dahlgren found his trooper awaiting him. And as he reined in his horse the man, riding forward, saluted.

"The fellow's ahead, sir," he reported.

"The spy?"

"Yes, sir. I had just dismounted by the ford, and was hidin' in the bushes, when he came down the road at a gallop."

"And crossed the stream?"

"Yes, sir. And went straight on to the gap."

Dahlgren's glance, following the direction of the trooper's finger, traced the course of the road as it skirted the three-cornered field be-

yond the ford, and then, twisting upward, and with the stream brawling past it, plunged into the rocky gorge at the end of the valley.

"Did he see you?" he demanded.

"I'm afraid he did, sir. He looked back once, right at the place where I was standin'."

"And then?"

"He whipped up his horse and disappeared in the gap. That was an hour and a half ago, sir, and I've been watchin' ever since. But he hasn't come back."

"And it's three miles through the gorge—and the further end is guarded. . . . He should be captured by now."

"Yes, sir—if he rode through."

"You mean . . . ?"

"That he'd be more apt to hide somewhere, and wait till nightfall—especially if he knows he's bein' followed."

"You're right." Dahlgren frowned thoughtfully. "Well, we'll take no chances," he went on, and, turning in the saddle, cast a last glance behind him, then wheeled his horse down toward the stream. "You will wait for the rest of the troop at the ford," he commanded, "and tell the sergeant to bring them on through the gap. He may go as slowly as he likes, but he must keep his eyes open, and let no one get by him." He paused by the muddy shallows. "Do you understand?"

"Perfectly, sir. And you . . . ?"

"I shall ride on alone."

He nodded curtly to the man's salute, and, splashing through the stream, climbed the winding road briskly.

The road, bending upward through walls of sheer rock, grew narrow and muddy. Here great moss-covered boulders reached out to strangle it; here it escaped into a dense strip of woodland; and here again, for an instant, it rolled through a clearing.

But the fugitive's hoof-prints never once swerved; and as Dahlgren followed them the keen zest of the hunter possessed him.

He had felt it before, this wild joy of the chase, but never with another man's life as the stake, and his own life in the balance. . . . And suddenly he wondered where the man would be hiding, and then, as suddenly, discovered that the trail had ceased, and, with a muttered oath, brought his horse to a standstill.

As far ahead as he could see, the road ran through thick underbrush. But in the lower growth on the left there were signs of a passage; and, turning, he drove his horse straight into the bushes. His progress was slow; but the course held true and at length led him to the edge of a tiny opening. And there, half-hidden in the brush, he found the fugitive's horse tethered.

He rode forward cautiously. The horse raised its head and snorted, then threw back its ears as he felt of its coat. But the sweat was dry; the beast had been standing for an hour at least.

Dismounting, Dahlgren stared about him in perplexity. In front rose the granite walls of the gorge; on either side and behind him stretched the network of tangle. It was in there that he must search. But where? And in what direction?

He had circled the enclosure, and was pausing near the rocks, before he found what he sought—the faint track of a foot in the mould. There was another on the very edge of the underbrush, and another still imbedded deep in the dense growth beyond. They were pointing due east; and as he frowned at them he remembered that there had once been a path which ran back through the brush to an old ruined cabin on the road below. The cabin was still there: he had seen it through the

woods as he had ridden past; and with the hoof-prints leading on he had not thought to examine it. But now . . . He rose swiftly to his feet, and, leaving his horse, forced his way into the thicket alone.

Even in the days of its usefulness it could have been called a path only by courtesy; now it was scarcely perceptible, the merest thread of a trail, twisting aimlessly eastward, and choked with creepers and briars. He lost it once and found it again, then finally abandoned it altogether, bearing off to the left where the bush-lot ended, and where, through the sparser trees of the woodland, the gray ribbon of road showed dimly. Here, turning once more, he swung to the right, and from the skirts of the forest peered out at the desolate cabin in the clearing before him.

It was fairly rotten with age. The rough hoarding of its walls was seamed and warped. Its roof, sagging heavily, had fallen in at one end; and through the jagged opening bleached timbers protruded. Like a pair of sightless eyes, the two windows, closely boarded, stood out from its gaunt front.

Its door-step was gone; but the worm-eaten door still clung to its hinges. And he noted with satisfaction that it opened inward, and that some recent effort had been made to secure it in its place.

He waited until his glance had taken in each detail, then, drawing his revolver, stole out from the trees, and, creeping through a wilderness of weeds and thorns, approached the cabin from its unguarded side. In the shelter of the wall he halted again and listened. Except for a murmur of air in the pine-tops, and the low elfin chuckling of the stream in the distance, the stillness was unbroken. He stooped cautiously, and, turning the corner of the house,

slipped past the front windows; then drawing himself up, he levelled his revolver, and with a quick thrust forward, flung his weight against the closed door.

It fell ajar with a rasp of hinges. He stepped in swiftly, and, closing it behind him, stood blinking in the gloom. A shaft of sunlight, striking through the hole in the roof, cast a dusky glow over the bare interior; and as he watched it breathlessly, a gleam of metal flashed in it, and a man's tall figure emerged from the shadows beyond.

Dahlgren stared at the face in amazement. "Lanier!" he exclaimed.

"Exactly." The other smiled faintly over the barrel of his revolver. "You weren't expecting me?"

"Hardly. The scar——"

"A kick by a horse two years ago." The man's smile broadened. "But I *was* expecting you."

"You mean . . . ?"

"I saw you go by on the road yonder. . . . What do you think of my ruse?"

The assurance of his tone stung Dahlgren's pride; but this was no time for anger.

"I can't see that you've profited by it," he returned evenly. "You're here in a trap, cornered——"

"Yes; but with the advantage of having you covered, and so being able to escape when I wish."

An ill-disguised triumph smouldered in Lanier's eyes; and Dahlgren, flushing hotly, closed his mouth with a snap. He had been tempted to disclose the approach of his troop; but common sense forbade him. It would bring the affair to a crisis before he was ready; and his one object now must be to fight for delay. . . .

Then a new fear confronted him. How would his men know that he was here? He had left orders that

they were to keep a sharp lookout. But with the trail in the road to lead them past, would it occur to them to stop at the cabin? And if they did not . . .

He became suddenly conscious of the death-like silence; and raised his eyes to the figure before him. Lanier had halted in the patch of sunlight, and, with his head thrown forward, was watching him with a satisfied smile.

"You must admit the advantage," he said.

But Dahlgren was not listening. There was something in the other's attitude—something disagreeably familiar—which had driven his thoughts back to the day when he had stood as he was standing now, with the man's revolver staring him in the eyes, and the man's mocking grin behind it. And the pent-up resentment of those five long years stirred again into life, rose like a vast eddying wave within him. He felt it swell up through the great veins of his neck, surge into his brain; and as the blind rage possessed him he forgot life, honor—everything—in the mad craving to annihilate that cold, haughty face. Slowly he raised the revolver at his side to the level of his hip. . . .

"None of that!" Lanier's voice cut the air with the keen incisiveness of a knife. "Drop that gun or I'll shoot!"

"Shoot?" The word burst derisively from Dahlgren's lips. "As you shot once before—and missed?"

An ugly light flickered in Lanier's eyes; but he spoke quietly.

"This is no stage duel," he returned. "We're not play-acting now."

"No, we're not," Dahlgren flung back at him. "I've neglected the accessories. There's no one to rush in and tear the gun from *your* grasp and call *you* a coward—a bully——"

"My God!" Lanier's face had gone a livid white, and he was quivering with anger. "If you dare to say——"

"Do you dare to deny it?" Dahlgren caught him up. "*Can* you, when every one knows it was a trumped-up farce—prearranged by you—even to the choice of shots——"

"It's a lie!" Lanier cried. "A lie on its face! We tossed——"

"And you won, and I lost. And you fired—and I couldn't. . . ." Dahlgren's hand, still resting on his hip, twitched nervously at the revolver. "I have that shot yet," he went on, bending forward. "I've saved it for years. And now, with God's help, I'll take it!" He crouched suddenly to the ground, and with a quick upward twist brought his weapon to bear. "Now fire, you cur—fire if you dare, and prove the truth of my words—show what you are, a trickster, a coward . . ."

He paused, breathing thickly; and through the red haze before him Lanier's face grew distorted and gray. The ugly scar on his cheek turned suddenly crimson; then the blood flushed back, and the scar faded, and with an angry oath the man hurled his gun from him.

"Take your shot—and be d——," he said, and, stepping forward a pace, drew himself up disdainfully.

Dahlgren rose slowly. The strange haze was still before his eyes. But the first stifling flood of passion had worn itself away; and he was calm now—curiously calm—with a cold, stern sense of the justice in the thing which he had to do. It was no savage revenge, this, but a righteous retribution, commensurate to his own wrongs and to those of his country.

With infinite care he sighted his revolver, training it on the second button of Lanier's jacket, then shifting it to the left breast, and dropping

it a trifle to allow for the upward jerk. The heart would lie there—and he had but one shot. He must make no mistake. . . .

He waited an instant for his hand to grow steadier; and as once before in the past the low gurgling of the stream, rising through the tense silence, crept into his consciousness. But then it had seemed to mock him, as the woman had mocked him; and now it was urgent and coaxing, and the woman was absent. . . .

He bent again over his weapon. Yes; she was absent—nor could she come if she wished. His men would see to that. . . . Besides, his quarrel was with Lanier—not with her.

And again he discovered that his hand was trembling; and again he paused. It was his nerves, he imagined—the result of his outburst of anger. . . . Still, he was sorry that he had met the woman—vexed that she had spoken as she had. It had accomplished nothing—*nothing*. . . . And then, quite suddenly, the vision of her face flashed before him—her face as he had seen it last, piteous in its appeal, and haunted with that strange, unnameable terror. . . .

But it was not strange to him now. He knew what she had feared. And her fears had come true. He had trapped the man whom she loved—her husband—the father. . . . His glance, rising swiftly, sought Lanier's eyes; and he choked with horror. They were the eyes of the child—*her* child—the boy whose little body had nestled in his arms, whose chubby hand . . .

With an agonized gasp he flung up his revolver and fired at the roof.

"I've taken—my shot," he announced, and, suddenly conscious

that he was shivering, groped at the wall for support.

There was an instant of silence. Then Lanier laughed sneeringly.

"And missed," he taunted him. "Yes; you *have* taken your shot, you blackguard! You've had your fair chance. And now, by the Lord, we're quits!" He stooped for his weapon, then, pausing abruptly, drew himself upright. "What's that?"

And through the breathless hush they heard it clearly: the noisy clamor of shouts, the under-drumming of hoofs. And as Dahlgren listened his heart leaped within him. His men were coming in answer to his shot—were coming here—to the cabin. . . . He turned as Lanier, seething with rage, swung upon him.

"So that's your game, is it?" he snarled. "You cowardly hound! You hadn't the nerve to kill me yourself, and arranged the shot as a signal. It was a trick from the beginning. A trick! Good God! And you claimed I tricked you!"

"Stop!" Dahlgren, writhing under the accusation, lunged forward. "Stop! Or, by Heaven, I'll—"

The shouts of the troopers, rising again, close by, swept the words from his lips; and his voice died weakly. They had left the road, were crossing the clearing. . . . He caught one glimpse of Lanier's scornful eyes, then, wheeling swiftly, flung the door open.

"Go on!" he cried, motioning vehemently to the men. "Go on—up the gorge! And ride like the devil!"

He waited while the troopers, swinging back at this command, disappeared up the road in a flurry of hoofs, then faced Lanier sternly.

"Go home," he said, "to your wife. And tell her I've forgotten."

ON WALKING HOME AT NIGHT

BY RICHARDSON WRIGHT

IT was Confucius or De Quincey, or Tchekoff, or some such master who voiced the golden counsel for him who would walk: that he must walk alone. A dog may trail at his heels, but it must be a dog that has trailed at those heels many a mile. And this holds, it would seem, in tramping either by day or night. For walking is a march of conquest, and little satisfaction is there in it save one be the sole conqueror, sharing none of the fight and none of the spoils. We must set forth upon it as on a solitary enterprise—we must be privateers of the road.

To thread one's way through a town's pretty suburbs; to plunge over the countryside, across field and burn; to swing, lusty and masterful, down a crowded city street; such walking is delight incalculable if we walk alone. Aimlessly our care-free feet carry us along; we are aliens in a strange land; and the end of the road is wherever we will make it.

To tramp with an objective is an entirely different affair. Then haphazard wandering becomes serious work. Then is drawn that subtle dividing line between those who only tour and those who travel. The one has a way to follow, a place to reach; and ever he is homesick for his home. The other never has a way, for all ways are his; and wherever he halts, there is his place, his home.

Many of us are only tourists, folk who go from place to place. From town to town we pass, down roads that other tourists have gone, and oftentimes the beauty of the interve-

ning stretches is withholden from our eyes.

And most of us who walk home at night are just that—tourists. In our mind's eye, naught but that house, that gate, that face at the window. Perhaps it is well. Contentment, though, is a dangerous boon. Often it means resignation; and resignation spells defeat and the end of questing. Far finer is it to be a traveler always, for then always do we reach our homes in amazement—simply by going on!

For some of us, walking home at night becomes a task, a drudgery, a burden bitterly borne, an added weight to the day's labor. But those who know the secret of the traveler say that it can be made the day's best hour. To go homing through the night is, for them, ever a journey fraught with high adventure; one is ever the discoverer. He comes to his dooryard with the satisfaction of one who has seen and done mighty things, the first to have trod that way.

And therein lies the secret of the traveler: that every road, however common to man and familiar to him, is a new road, and every city street a street in a strange land.

II

I have often attempted to analyze the psychology of walking, and what has been set down in the foregoing paragraphs is the result of seeking for the reason why I have been able to tolerate some streets down which I have been obliged to pass from time to time in my life. To-day it happens to be city streets. Once it

was the streets of a new and lusty suburb, and time and again it has been country roads here and in a dozen different lands. Although the deductions may sound arrogantly self-fish, I can find no other way of saying truthfully what I honestly believe—that the best way to get the most out of a walk is to walk alone and without recognizing a definite objective, albeit that objective does exist.

In this busy work-a-day world such counsel may sound oddly out of place. On city streets we have to dodge through long queues of traffic, and we move or halt at a policeman's signal; in the suburbs and often in the country our solitary peace is disturbed by the rancorous, cacophonous honk of Juggernaut motor-cars warning us of impending destruction. For that reason I have found it wiser to be only a tourist by day, dodging about from office to office. Then when night closes down and the day's work is done, the spirit of the traveler creeps over me. The way takes on a new form, and I enter upon a new atmosphere.

A magician of passing splendor is the Night. How marvelously spreads its blue mystery over the world from dusk to dawn—"gloom out of gloom uncoiling into gloom." In countryside, in city, and even in suburbs that are dull by day it works a change almost unbelievable.

Do you remember Whistler's description of dusk in the city? "When the evening mist clothes the riverside with poetry, as with a veil, and the poor buildings lose themselves in the dim sky, and the tall chimneys become campanili, and the whole city hangs in the heavens, and fairyland is laid before us, then the wayfarer hastens home . . ."

To the city Night brings the reviving, immortalizing touch of Nature, as if to remind us that even

dead stone and steel can live. It sends the elf people trooping down the streets. It hangs eerie lights on skyscrapers, makes giddy phantasmagoria of the elevated trains, and transforms into a masterful being the man who by day is swallowed in the mob.

To the raw scenes of suburban life it lends an air of age and urbanity. The newest house by night appears old, and the sleek, straight, new streets assume vistas that reach far into the past and stretch on into the future. For the suburb is distinctly a thing of the present, whereas Nature would have it and every habitation of man a thing of all time.

And by night, more than ever does the countryside become a living, throbbing world. Then is it busily intent upon its work. A thousand eyes look around at your footfall. A thousand little creatures halt in their labor to watch you pass. And there is the hum of new sounds. Lying behind a hedgerow one night last spring, I counted more than two score different sounds that I had never heard by day. They were the whirl and clash, the drone and chatter of the country's night life.

III

It can never be—and one could never wish it—that a walk should lack the touch of human relationships. There are others on the road, only one's relation to them depends upon where the road is and if it be day or night. The human relationships of the road by day spring from friendship, and have a glory of their own; the relationships by night are founded on the instinct of self-preservation and defense. In the city you know no one; in the suburbs everyone knows you; in the country you know everyone.

My street of wonder in the city for the past two years has been a

ON WALKING HOME AT NIGHT

block-length of an avenue in the old heart of New York. Over it hangs a glory of days gone, remnant of ancient aristocracy. A long line of brownstone houses with basement areaways and balustraded steps. A peg-post policeman and an arc-light stand at each end, and two arc-lights in between. A thoroughly respectable, seemingly uninteresting stretch on the whole. Yet romance dwelt in that street, and high emprise, and each night there was a new romance and a new adventure. Life by night there was like a moving-picture film unrolling now a tragedy, now a comedy, now a pretty glimpse of some short and simple annal.

Drifted in from the highway would be the flotsam and jetsam, men and women in rags who sat on the steps of the aristocrats, like Lazarus at Dives' table. I never saw a crumb fall, however. Now and again a policeman would be enjoying a forbidden smoke. The private policeman always smoked. A gay Lothario was this private policeman. He seemed to know every housemaid on the block, but with a fine sense of the proprieties would he exercise his charms. Often have I seen him lingering beside a gatepost in evident meditation though in reality only waiting for the housemaid to bid her coachman friend good-night. Then would the Arm of the Law stroll humming up the pavement. A low whistle; and never the time but the whistle was answered. Somehow, housemaids must be frightfully fickle!

One night I found a burglar—a modest burglar. With assiduity was he driving his trade when I chanced to pass the areaway. There was no time to ask questions or to summon help, for the private policeman was busy at the other end of the block talking to the minister's cook. So I went on to a point of vantage whence

I saw him gather up his tools and scurry away into the darkness, like a rat.

Women too walked that street. Some, I felt, were thinking of the men and women who would walk there in days to come. Other women just walked.

Once the lights were bright and I waited to see the bride come forth; twice an undertaker's wagon stood there.

Down that street I passed each night for two years, and never did I speak to a soul. In the city, you know no one—save the angels that hover of rainy nights around the arc-lights, and cover their faces with their wings. . . .

If one can only grasp it, walking home at night in a suburb is like playing a role in a farce. The suburbanite has always made himself a caricature and it seems that he always will. There is so much conscious effort about a suburb and the suburbanite invariably seems to be pretending to be what he is not. Across the stage of its life at night strolls a medleyed cast: the ebulliently eupeptic commuter staggering under a load of bundles; the ebulliently narcotic commuter staggering under a load of his folly; dazzling matrons who have slept all the way out in the theater train; sleepy children; and, quite sufficient unto themselves, young couples to whom life is still a honeymoon.

One by one they scurry off the main street and seek their homes. You follow them with your eye, and when their front doors bang, you utter a sigh of relief, for you felt it was a bit unsafe for them to be out so late.

You pass a house that heretofore has been darkened at that hour. What! What! sputters your thought. What can Jones be doing up at this time of night? You are

amazed, and you pass on your way muttering incoherently.

Over a porch doorway you see a light burning, and instinctively the rueful thought comes that that neighbor of yours is going to have a wallowing big gas bill if his women-folk are not more careful.

The dangers of suburban streets are akin to none in the world. Serenely are you marching along, when suddenly your foot hits a snag and you are hurled into a maelstrom of flying wire and iron. It may be a lawn guard, but like as not it is a tricycle left out by some child. Where else but in a suburb can one be hurled headfirst over a tricycle?

And here the human relationships are at their full.

Walk down your suburban street late o' nights and count how many folks pass and fail to speak. In the suburbs everyone knows you, they know your personality and your personal affairs. Your well-being is part of theirs, and each man arrogates unto himself the unspoken but none-the-less obvious counsel on how he would do the thing if he were doing it.

But there is one final and glorious spell that grips the night life of the suburb: the race for the last car. Between supper time and the hour the last car pulls out, a spirit of suppressed anxiety holds the town in thrall. As the minutes approach, doors open, out scurry young and old. The street sees dignified matrons panting down the hill; young girls dashing through the darkness, a yard of chiffon flying in their wake; and men lumbering along like ice-wagons.

To go home through such an atmosphere and not see the cosmic joke of it all is to be blind. Valiantly is Nature striving to give an air of age and urbanity to the suburb, and like an adolescent full of *faux*

pas man blunders in his naïveté and spoils it all. . . .

It has always been a moot point with me whether I enjoy going home at night in the country best, or in the city. In the latter, one is raised to a plane higher than he is by day; in the former, it would seem that he were a degree degraded.

I am always conscious of being an intruder when I walk across country at night. I have the same sensation I do when I walk into a man's office on his busy day. Just so in the country. There is no such thing as strolling along a country road at night, if you will remember. One has to be brisk, to keep moving, to state one's business and pass on. It would seem that the busy country permits you there only by right of your having arrived there. The shadows of the road frown upon you and the trees threaten. You are a spy, they seem to say, and until they are sure of you, they will have none of you.

In this instance I was thinking of how once the countryside accused me, and how I fled before it in terror.

Midday had found us at Boom—Boom of the brickyards and the long bridge over the sleepy Scheldt under which drifted the master of wayfarers, Stevenson, on his "Inland Voyage." At tea-time we dropped into an inn and supped on flat beer and indescribable sandwiches. The man behind the bar eyed us dully. The dog and I were strangers to the section and he seemed uncertain of us. After the second scrap of gristle, Jack grew uneasy. There was work ahead, he seemed to say, stern, dangerous work; and he took his stand by the door whence he threw back anxious glances. Yes, it was stern work. As I rose to pay the score, he of the bar became actively solicitous that we stay the night. I mumbled some sort of ex-

cuse and passed out. I knew he watched us from the window.

A few yards, and the village had faded back into the night. We were alone, save where on either side the road stood "at attention" the stiff ranks of sentry poplars. They seemed ready, waiting for some signal of alarm. And there was alarm enough: overhead the Zeppelins of God wheeled across the sky and a flying star volplaned down through space. Their twinkling lights were quite distinct. Now and then from a concealed hollow rose a puff of cloud smoke that veiled them; then on they sped, flashing, terrible, serene. Behind us and before, the ranks closed together. Already they were on the march.

A mile farther we passed a bivouac of forested trees that tossed and rustled like men in troubled sleep. Then, dragging up a hill, where stood a lone outpost poplar that nodded to us to pass the line, we went down into the open meadows. Trenches scarred the field on every hand. There had been a battle there that day. With ploughshare and harrow had men fought against the unyielding soil. Under cover of night they had retreated, leaving behind them, tilted in the trenches, the engines of their warfare.

Beyond the trenches we halted for a sound. No sound came. I swept the horizon for a light. None was to

be seen save where the watchful Zeppelins wheeled in space. Withering terror struck me. We could be seen, and yet could not see. We could be heard, and yet could hear never a sound. Spy! the accusation came from every side. Spy! shouted the hedgerow and the trench: Spy! In cowardly desperation I leaned down a hand, and a wet snout snuggled consolingly into it.

Suddenly out of the darkness ahead, a scuffle. The outpost of the enemy? Were the lines so close together to-night? What vigilance above! What vigilance below! Came the sound of song: a woman's voice. Then out of the night a form. Noiselessly we crept on. The song continued. Who could be so buoyant in such times? The words became audible—a lullaby. It was a mother and a child, and the child was in her arms.

That was the road to Malines as we tramped it one night some years ago, my little fox-terrier and I—Malines where we found our home, where the kit bags and the blessed books were being held in bondage.

The sentry trees, dispatches say, have been felled lest they obstruct artillery fire. And where our feet trod now rumble grim ammunition trains and thud a host of armed men.

The woman? Does she still trudge homeward through the night crooning to her baby? I wonder.



THE RAKE'S PROGRESS

BY MAY EDGINTON

ORPINGTON, pale and a little haggard, but, as ever, the last dandiacal word, was shown in, and stood before his betrothed. He bowed, but made no attempt to speak.

"Well, sir?" said Constance.

"I take it," he answered at once, "that I am here on my defence; that you have sent for me thus to tell me—to inquire into——"

"I have no questions to ask," said Constance, biting her under lip. "I have sent for you merely to tell you——"

He moved forward, looking into her face.

"To go, sir."

There was a silence, while his white face grew whiter, and his knuckles strained his sword-hilt, and loosened again spasmodically. He adjusted the fringe of lace that fell over them, flicked a minute speck of dust from his shoe-tip with a silk handkerchief, breathing rather heavily. Constance sat with her hands clasped tightly in her lap, and her head bent. Her hooped skirts rose round her in a great wave of flowered brocade, and the jewels scintillated with the rise and fall of her breast. He looked at her thus for nearly two minutes, while the stillness oppressed.

"God!" said he.

"No blasphemy, no excitement, for lud's sake!" said Constance. "I cannot bear it. I am acting on my parents' orders——"

"Your parents' orders!" said Orpington, instantly beside her. "And you, my dearest? Your own heart? Tell me what that says. Tell me——"

"It obeys the orders of my parents, sir," said Constance.

She moved away a little, biting her lips and trembling, but they were still so close that their two pairs of eyes stared into each other, with barely a couple of feet between them. He was equally agitated.

"A heart cannot be ruled, dearest. If you gave me yours, it is still mine own, unworthy as I am to the possession of such a treasure. Unworthy I know myself to be, but——"

"There is no 'but,'" said Constance rapidly, looking away. "My parents were averse to our betrothal; you know that. As a younger son, and therefore well-nigh penniless, it behoved you, surely, to do all in your power to further your interests with His Majesty, when you were commissioned to his army, and admitted to his personal bodyguard. Instead of which——"

Orpington reddened furiously, playing with his sword-hilt.

"Instead of which, you would say, I have ruined myself. Listen, Constance. I tell you, I was in the St. James', with others, when the Prince came in. He was drunk. Well, then, well—we were all drunk, as you like. It was over the dice that he picked a quarrel with me. I, not forgetting a whit that an indiscriminating Heaven had made him a Prince, struck him as I would strike a commoner. What could follow between gentlemen but instant arrangements for a meeting? The Prince——"

"Madman!" said Constance, clasping and unclasping her nervous hands. "Madman! The King has

his German friends about the Court and the clubs. You know that. It was certain that he would be instantly apprised of what was happening, and equally certain that he would have you clapped in the guard-house to await his punishment. You cannot fight a duel with royalty. What are you now, sir? A penniless officer, disgracefully dismissed from His Majesty's army, and forbidden the Court! My father refuses to allow me to receive you again. My mother also advises me likewise. Your wild habits, your debts, your gambling, have always displeased them. They gave way only at my fervent solicitation. Now——"

Orpington, deadly pale again, answered nothing.

"Now," said Constance faintly, "there is no more to be said. A marriage with you is impossible, as you must see for yourself, sir. I am—accustomed to society. You are henceforth banned by it. I need my luxuries, my dress, my coach, my pleasures—sir, you have not, nor will have, the wherewithal to provide such. I—am not born to poverty. I—cannot flout my parents' wishes. I—in short, it is all over between us."

"Not so," he breathed. "Not so, Constance."

She stood up, seeming to force a difficult resolution on herself.

"Go, if you please. Go. . . . Good-by."

He stared at her, and, putting both hands on her shoulders, turned her round to face the window. The light fell full upon her face, and showed it ghastly pale by contrast with the little whig patches on her right temple. Her lips quivered, and she bit them furiously. Her lashes swept her oval cheeks.

"Look me in the eyes," he whispered.

She resisted mutely for a moment, then obeyed, so that he saw the tears.

He put his arms about her and held her.

"My dearest! My sweet! My heart!"

She put her hands up over her face, and lay against his shoulder for a moment.

"You love me?" said Orpington hoarsely.

"I—have—loved you——"

"And do yet. Answer me, Constance."

"N—n—no . . . N—n—no . . ."

"Your eyes denied that! It is not true!" he said, with exultant passion.

"It is that, like your parents, you are afraid of my poverty, my so-called disgrace. Disgrace! My father has cast me out, my King has cast me out—now you would! And in spite of it all, I hold up my head and maintain that 'disgrace'; which has never touched an Orpington yet, has not touched me either. My dearest, do you not love me well enough to withstand your parents, withstand the dictum of fashionable society, to wait while I seek a chance of reinstating—of righting—myself——"

"There is no such chance."

He knew that, desperately. He released her, and they stood looking at each other. Constance averted her eyes from his bitter face.

"I have no hope left in life."

"I am sorry," she said faintly. "I am sorry. What more is there to be said? You have incurred the King's direst displeasure—you are disgraced, a ruined man. Your father has cast you out. You are a born gambler, and your excesses have been for months the talk of the town. What more is there to be said? I obey my parents——"

"You were not always so complaisant to them."

"What do you mean, sir?"

He stared at her with eyes suddenly charged with suspicion.

"I mean—God! I think, I mean I see something else in this, Constance. Your mind for me has changed. It is not only this trouble. You want your 'luxuries', your dress, your pleasures; I, erstwhile a poor officer in His Majesty's army, had never the wherewithal to provide such. You are not loath to obey your parents' commands. You want a rich husband."

"You misjudge me," she faltered.

"I do not, and you know it," said Orpington. "Some man has come between you and me. Constance, who is it?"

Looking at her, he read the affirmation in her face, and was seized with a kind of despairing fury.

"God's sake! Constance, who is it? So that I may seek him out, challenge him, meet him in Hyde Park Ring at sunrise to-morrow—"

She met his eyes steadily.

"That would be impossible, sir," she said slowly. "No gentleman would meet you, and you know it."

After the pause that fell, "Heaven forgive you for that," he said hoarsely, "and Heaven knows it's true! I am humbled to that—fallen so low as that! I am no longer an honorable target! But again, Constance, I demand his name."

She moved away up the room; he followed, and caught her by the wrist, so that she was forced to stand.

"I will not tell you," she answered.

He waited a moment, his brain working. Then, "By heaven!" he said. "Blessington!"

"And if it is?" she said stormily, trying to free her wrist.

"Blessington!" he said, a sort of sullen mask clouding his face. "Blessington! Twenty years your elder, but with his fat pockets well lined with German gold! You will have your luxuries, your coach, your dress, your amusements, and—Bles-

sington! Lord! What a woman will do for wealth! So you are to marry Blessington. You were on with the new love before you were off with the old, hey?"

She compelled her overweening pride to her aid, wrenched her hand away, and answered:

"We heard yesterday of your disgrace. The town was ringing with it. Everywhere I went, in the shops, in the Mall, at the Duke's drum, my acquaintance spoke of it. I will not be humiliated thus, sir. I realized all was over. Lord Blessington met me—'twas at the Duke's—I—he——"

"Curse him!" said Orpington furiously. "'Twould be like him to stab in the dark a man who is down through no fault of his own."

"I promised to consider his proposals," she flung it out recklessly. "He is coming here this very day for my answer. And now leave me, sir, and good-by."

Orpington took one or two hasty turns up and down the room. She had retreated to the hearth, where one or two logs burned redly, and stood making a pretense of warming her foot, but watching him under her long lashes. She loved him, and she knew it, but she was a fashionable beauty, who would scorn to own to the existence of a heart. Moreover, he "had not the wherewithal to provide" such things as were the breath of life to her. She drove her teeth into her full under lip, quelled its trembling, and maintained an icily serene front.

He suddenly came to a full stop in front of her.

"Good-by, then," he whispered, and turned away.

The woman in her overcame the worldling for an instant. She caught at the lapel of his coat.

"Where will you go?" she asked, as low. "What will you do?"

"I have nowhere to go and nothing to do." His dark eyes looked somberly out at her from his white face. "But a man can soon find both. In any case, it will matter little to Lady Blessington, I take it." She still held his coat, and he heard her long, quivering, irrepressible sigh. "My God!" he said passionately, turning and taking her in his arms, "how I've loved you! How I love you, dearest! Well enough to know myself not worthy of you. Well enough to be glad, Heaven grant, by and by, that you thus dismiss me! If I thought that Blessington—if I thought this made for your real happiness——"

"It does! It does!" she quavered. "It is what I—wish."

"Kiss me good-by," said Orpington.

She avoided his eyes, lifted a cold cheek, and he kissed it. "Is that all, then?" he asked.

"Go! Go! Go!" said Constance.

"Give me something to take with me, to wear on my heart," he said.

She was wearing a black velvet ribbon round her white throat, threaded through a jewelled locket. He put up slow hands and unfastened it, lingering reluctantly over the task. Constance stood like a statue.

"Good-by," he said, the bauble lying in his hand. "It might have been a talisman. It can be but a bad souvenir. Good-by."

He went to the door, and turned there, for a last look—a brave figure in gray satin, powdered hair tied in a queue at his neck, silhouetted against the dark oak. Constance was by the hearth, motionless, her eyelashes almost resting on her pale cheeks.

"Good-by, then, my dearest. It is the last time—good-by."

He lingered a moment for the response that did not come, and went slowly out. Constance sat down,

sighed, and wept a little. Presently, when her tears had stopped, she went to her room, to repair the damage to her complexion, change her gown, and put another jewel at her neck. A clever tirewoman had soon done it all in the shortest possible time, and a radiant image faced her again from the glass. The traces of tears had been bathed from her eyes, a touch of rouge applied to either cheek, and her hair elaborately piled and freshly powdered. She had chosen with care a long green brocade gown, and put a single great ruby at her throat. The heartache underneath lessened while she looked steadily into her glass, and into the future which her mental vision conjured up. Lord Blessington's wife would be a leader of fashionable society, feted in political circles, honored at Court. Orpington's wife would have been—she shuddered slightly.

There was a knock at the door, which the maid answered. She came back into the room, bearing a magnificent bouquet of white roses.

"Lord Blessington's lackey has brought these for you, my lady," said she, "and begs to say that his master sends his compliments and will wait upon you in half an hour."

Constance sat still. Perhaps head and heart fought for a moment or two, but there was no sign of that battle in her serene face.

"Give me the roses," she said.

She took them, smelled their fragrance. She was thinking—thinking—thinking—of the answer she would give to Blessington. She hardly wavered before, drawing out half a dozen of the pure, perfect white blooms, she fastened them into the bosom of her green gown. She rose and looked at herself, and saw how beautiful she was.

"Put the others in water," she said. "Take care of them. I shall

carry them to-night, for Lord Blessington will take my mother and me to the theater," and so went down to await him.

II.

So Harry Orpington, that graceless prodigal, the younger son of the Earl of Orpington, was summarily expelled from His Majesty's army, his name struck from the club books, and his reputation a byword in the society of the day, which, in King George's time, kept up at least a superficial respectability when the monarch's eyes were on it. His friends fell away, and his enemies rejoiced. Frederick, Prince of Wales, that good-natured debauchee, swore, as soon as his muddled head was clear again, that Orpington had been hardly dealt with, and that an apology to himself would have met the case. To which Orpington's acquaintance, who knew the man, replied that no apology for the episode could have been wrung from him under any consideration, and His Majesty grunted that his court was well rid of a hopeless young rake. Orpington disappeared, and conjectures as to his whereabouts soon dropped for lack of possible answer. In any case, a man is soon forgotten as soon as he was gone well under.

Topics that interested London shortly after were Lord Blessington's wedding, and the bold raids of a highwayman within a radius of twenty miles or so from London. The wedding was a splendid affair, and Lady Blessington's beauty thereat a wonder to beholders, but the ceremony was soon over. Not so the other excitement. Travelers came daily into London telling deplorable tales of robbery by a masked man in black, mounted on the finest strawberry roan in England. Such a fellow he was, daring to madness, brave to desperation, cool to a mir-

acle, and he could not be identified with Galloping Dick, Red Ned, Tom Toms, Old Nick, or any known and feared Gentleman of the Road. Day by day, week by week, month by month, his reputation grew, and the tale of his deeds multiplied. His petty robberies were numbered in scores, and the soldiery scoured the country for thirty miles round the city. Plans were devised, and traps were laid for him, but if he rode in, he rode out of them again, on the red roan mare. Rumor had it that in the broad daylight of a November afternoon he held up the Prime Minister, and four shivering (and armed) post-boys, while transactions infinitely satisfactory to the highwayman were carried out. He ordered pistols to be handed over, and the post-boys, quaking in their boots, obeyed, in spite of the curses of the great Pitt, who thereupon turned his carriage, galloped back to London, and called out the soldiery; to such little avail, however, that even the next day, while their search parties still scoured the heath, the highwayman "held up" no less a person than the Archbishop of York, on precisely the same route, and by precisely the same tactics. The Archbishop, driving from London to York, pursued his journey a sadder and wiser man, and the tale was soon flying round the town. It was not long after that the audacity of the highwayman asserted itself in the case of His Majesty King George II. That little German gentleman, hunting in the vicinity of Epping Forest, was momentarily parted from his bodyguard. He found a strawberry mare loping easily beside his own stout mount, a black shoulder pressing beside his own august one, and a pistol perilously near his ear.

"Pull up, Sire!" said the highwayman.

A ruler of men knows when to

obey, and George pulled up. But he spluttered with rage.

"Gott! fellow, take your cursed pistol from my head! I am the King of England. Hullo, Blessington! Frederick! Hul——"

"Silence, Sire!" said the highwayman.

The King looked down that polished barrel, and held his tongue. Horses' feet galloped near.

"Your purse, Sire!" said the highwayman rapidly, but in no wise distressed by the pressing need of hurry. "Your ring. Your snuff-box—no, Sire, the diamond one. King or no king, I'll shoot before three seconds if——"

They were his one second before the Prince of Wales and Blessington came shouting into view, and he turned the mare and flashed into the forest.

"Damme!" cried George, suffused with rage. "How dare you, sirs! Where were you? *Gott in Himmel!* I don't want your lies! I have been robbed, sirs, in broad daylight, the King of England robbed by one of his rebel subjects, and you near! After him, all of you, I say! After him!"

The whole hunt was after him, in hue and cry, and they sighted him down a ride, the roan mare galloping easily and strong. He turned in his saddle a moment, waved his hand airily, doffed his hat to His Majesty leading the van, and sent the mare on, flying neck or nothing. Not all the king's horses and all the king's men could have caught him then. It was a spicy tale for the town, but diplomatists did not dwell upon it at Court.

"Who is the fellow?" the question rose afresh. "He showed a knowledge of the King's snuff-boxes, they say—would take the diamonds. Who is he?"

As usual, nobody could answer

that question. They nick-named him "Black Harry," because of his funeral garb, but did not know how near they had struck the truth. Things went thus for nearly a twelvemonth.

There was racing and chasing on Blackheath.

The day before, a particularly audacious robbery had roused London, and a captain and half a dozen men, on picked horses, were told off the next morning to catch the rogue, or give the reason why. News of him had been brought to the barracks by a watchman, who declared that, in the small hours of the morning, a black-habited man on a roan mare had actually ridden through the streets, and headed, apparently, for Blackheath. About three o'clock on a gray October afternoon, the troopers on the heath sighted a solitary rider against the sky-line, and pursued at a gallop. The rider pulled up, and stood, so that they got a clear sight of him. It was undoubtedly Black Harry on his famous strawberry roan. Knowing the man, and wary of his ready fire, they slowed down and approached him cautiously at a trot, out of pistol range. Their captain, making a trumpet of his hands, while the highwayman thus stood stock still, surveying them, shouted:

"Throw down your arms, sir, and surrender, in the name of the King!"

Then the race began. No sooner had the words left the captain's mouth, than the roan mare was wheeled round as if on a pivot, and started over the heath. The soldiers spurred in pursuit, and the highwayman began to ride in a circle, dodging, galloping, jumping, now disappearing behind tree clumps, now emerging, well out of range, and playing with his pursuers till the air resounded with their oaths. The mare had a marvelous turn of speed,

and it was evident that the highwayman could break away when he chose. Now and again he turned in his saddle, waved his hat, and shouted derision. Then he would ride off at top speed for a half mile or so, while they spurred and panted in pursuit. It was a ludicrous game he played during that October afternoon with seven blowing, swearing soldiers of His Majesty's army. He seemed to know, inch by inch, the geography of the heath. By and by he headed northwards, shot away, and they lost sight of him, but, mindful of instructions, they kept doggedly on.

He galloped on, singing. He laid the reins on the mare's neck, patted her, and let her go. She went, strong and untiring, until she caught a forefoot in a rabbit-hole, and came down, flinging him over her head. He rose unhurt and caught her bridle. She essayed to rise, grunted, groaned, whinnied a little, as if to say it was not possible that she should ever rise again. Her foreleg was broken above the fetlock, and she lay, sweating and panting, turning piteous soft eyes upon him. He stood up, motionless a moment, and turned his head towards London. On the wind came the faint distant, steady, dogged galloping. He was pale and sick with the stunning fall, but his lips set wickedly under the mask, and his dark eyes snapped through the eyelet holes. So he stood motionless, and turned the situation about in his quick brain. The mare sighed, and cried a little. He bent down to the saddle, drew a pistol from the holster, caressed her head, her velvet snout, her long wet ears, gently, then, putting the muzzle into an ear, shot her dead. The galloping was ever nearer. He listened to it, defining it with the craftiness of the hunted. It was not all from one direction, and somewhere was the

rumble of wheels. He loaded his pistol, his eyes lightened, and he laughed a little. Then, walking cautiously away from the carcass, he sought the concealment of a sparse clump of gorse-bushes, dropped on one knee, and stayed, listening. The sun was setting in one red splash in a gray sky. October dusk crept on.

III.

Lord Blessington's carriage, traveling fast over Blackheath, swayed suddenly, as the horses shied at a large, dark, inert object near their path. When they had shied, they stopped, and stood trembling and staring, snuffing the air.

"A dead horse, by the look o' it," said one post-boy to the other, peering down the twilight. "Whip up, and get them past."

But it is hard, sometimes impossible, to get horses by a carcass of one of their own kind, and the whipping and spurring and swearing that ensued were not efficacious. My Lord put his head out and joined his voice to the commotion.

"'S death, fellows! What are you stopping for? Drive past the plaguy thing, or through it, or over it, alive or dead, whatever 'tis. Stab me, you're pretty riders if you cannot take a pair of horses across the heath. Get on, I say, or we'll be meeting some of these gentlemen who——"

"God! my Lord!" shrilled a post-boy. "'Tis Black Harry's roan—and 'tis Black Harry himself!"

Lord Blessington turned his head hastily, and looked down the shining barrel of a pistol. A black-clothed, black-masked man had stepped out from behind a clump of gorse, and stood by the carriage, a pistol in either hand. One covered the trembling post-boys, who had already dropped their reins and flung up their arms. The other was turned

on Blessington, as he hung from the carriage window. A moment's staggered silence, and then Blessington's hand flew to his hip.

"Hands up!" said the highwayman, and up they went, instantly. The earl hung from the window, pale as death, and faced the black mack.

He began stammering futilities.

"What d' you want, fellow? What d' you want? Devil take me if this isn't a pretty thing! Get your pistols out, you cowards, and pepper him, I say——"

"Silence, my Lord," said the highwayman. "Keep your hands up, boys. It's Black Harry right enough, speaking to you, and he says, keep your hands up."

They knew enough to obey. The name was a name to conjure with. The highwayman stood, holding his pistols steady, and staring into Blessington's face. His own was hidden behind the mask, save for the set mouth and dark eyes.

"My purse?" said Blessington, after a pause, rolling his tongue round dry lips. "I cannot get it, curse you, with my arms above my head."

"I will leave you your purse, my Lord," said the highwayman rather thickly. "There are reasons why I will not rob you save of what is necessary. It is necessary that I have one of your horses, and at once. The near-side chestnut looks about my stamp, and should be able to gallop a bit. The King's men are out after me, and my mare lies dead there. I request you, therefore, my Lord, to throw away your pistol into that gorse-bush and to order your servants to do likewise with theirs."

"Curse me! this is a pretty thing," raged Blessington, bullying and chafing, and sore afraid down to his very marrow.

The highwayman's voice rang out:

"Down with your arms, or, by the

Lord, I shoot! And no tricks with them while you have them in your hand. I've got you all covered. Right or left, I can aim as straight, and a man more or less matters little in my account."

Three pistols were tossed into the gorse-bushes.

"Your word of honor, my Lord, that you carry no other arms."

"No more, devil take you! No more!" fumed Blessington.

"Order that the chestnut there be taken out," said the highwayman, "and my saddle put upon him."

A post-boy slid off the chestnut, trembling.

"God! man, 'tis impossible!" cried Blessington. There was a new entreaty in his voice. "We are traveling post-haste, my wife and I, to Lewes, and the delay is life or death. We cannot spare a horse, were the whole English army and the devil himself after you——"

"My Lord——"

"Our case is urgent," said Blessington rapidly, "we cannot make any progress with but one horse. I tell you, your demand is impossible."

The pistol-barrel had wavered a moment.

"Do you say, my Lord," asked the highwayman, rather huskily, "that Lady Blessington is in the carriage?"

"Bring your head in from the window," cried a woman's voice. "Do not stand parleying there. Open the door, that I may speak with this gentleman, show him our need, beg his pity. Ah, sir——"

"Open the carriage door, my Lord," said the highwayman.

Blessington obeyed, and Constance leaned out. She had a dark traveling-cloak about her, and a thick veil tossed back from her beautiful white face. On her bosom lay a tiny breathing bundle lapped in silks and laces. The highwayman's eyes

darted to that instantly, and the pistols wavered in his hands. Her own eyes, big, bright, despairing, searched the black-masked face. Her voice choked and sobbed.

"You delay us, sir, and it is life or death. We are traveling with my baby to Lewes, to a great doctor who unfortunately left London yesterday. The child has been seized with illness, sir, is dying, is——"

Her hungry arms clasped it, her cheek was against its soft, waxlike face. There was no lack of feeling, of emotion, of love, of passion, in her own.

"My baby will die!" she cried. "Lord God! my little child will die, while you parley here, rob us of our horse, stop us on our road. Pity, sir, pity! Pity! Pity!"

"You stoop to plead to this rascal?" said Blessington furiously.

The highwayman stood stock-still.

"I plead to you, sir," she said, disregarding her husband, and leaning out. "I beg you—I pray you as I would pray Heaven, not to hinder us, not to—to——My little child will die! Mercy, sir! Let us go!"

The robber spoke very slowly. "Get back on your horse, boy. Madam——"

The post-boy scrambled back and seized his reins. Blessington stared, chafing. Constance, looking into the dark eyes through the mask, caught her breath and wondered at her own sudden heart-pang.

"I would not delay you," he said softly. "But first"—he dropped the pistol from his right hand, felt under his neck-cloth, and withdrew something—"first let me see the baby's face a moment——"

She turned the infant to him, and he looked down an instant at its closed eyes, its waxen pallor. Bend-

ing forward, he was between her and Blessington. He laid something down lingeringly on the baby's breast, and, glancing at it, she caught it up—and knew him. It was a jewelled locket threaded on a black velvet ribbon.

"Harry!" she whispered, so low that Blessington could not hear. Her breath was on his cheek a moment. He drew back and closed the door.

"God bless you," he said. "God bless your little child. God keep you always."

He fell back a pace.

"My Lord," he said to Blessington, "your horses like not my poor mare. Allow me to lead them by, and to wish you a speedy journey."

He had his hat off to the trembling woman, and the setting sun glorified his tossed brown hair. He went to the horses' heads, patted them, spoke to them, urged the quaking beasts by the carcass, and saw them start off at a hand-gallop southward. He stood to watch them out of sight, till the growing dusk swallowed them up.

With the dying of the sounds of their wheels, came other sounds, the steady, insistent rhythm of galloping hoofs. The King's men came riding over the heath, shouted at him, called to him to surrender. He stood by the roan mare's carcass, and answered them to keep back. Knowing him, they did so. He was out of bullet range—except from his own trusty pistol, and that was in his hand. He looked down at it, smiled, took off his mask, and lifted the pistol to his temple, while the wavering soldiery peered at his dim shape through the dusk.

"Well, well," said he, "'t would be a hanging matter if they took me;" and, turning to the west, saw his last sun go down.

DISILLUSIONMENT

BY CRITTENDEN MARRIOTT

Author of "The Isle of Dead Ships," "Out of Russia," etc.

ON the twenty-third day of Crenshawe's illness he had seemed on the high-road to recovery; but on the twenty-fourth he suffered a severe and sudden set-back.

The doctor—not Doctor Merton; Doctor Merton had long since been discarded—the doctor could not understand it. True, Crenshawe had been badly injured, and it necessarily took a long time for his broken bones and torn sinews to heal. But this could not account for the relapse. The doctor suspected some mental strain, but his questionings only excited his patient, and elicited no intelligible response.

He was right, however: Crenshawe had been mentally stricken. He had suddenly realized that he had no right to get well; that it was a sort of treachery for him to be alive at all. At first he had forgotten; and it was only when he was convalescing that he had been abruptly reminded that he had been allowed to win the game on the understanding that he was dying; and he had not died. The fact that he was innocent of any intention to deceive did not alter the situation.

The fault had really been Doctor Merton's. Doctor Merton was present when Crenshawe was injured, and Doctor Merton was very young and very sure of himself. He had just been graduated from a famous medical and surgical college at the top of his class, and he had not as yet been chastened by actual contact with the suffering world. To him the human body was as simple as an

algebraic equation; certain injuries were curable; others were incurable. He examined Crenshawe's injuries, and decided that they were in the latter class, and that Crenshawe must die. He would give him one hour, perhaps two; then——"

From his point of view he did right in telling Crenshawe what he felt certain was the truth. He knew Crenshawe was a man of great wealth and large affairs, and naturally supposed that he would want to use his last hours in setting his affairs in order. Doctor Merton knew nothing of Crenshawe's feelings for Edith Norcross, and probably would not have thought much about them if he had. Youth considers its own love affairs of tremendous importance, but seldom takes other people's seriously. Certainly he did not take Edith's gratitude to Crenshawe into account.

It was Edith's niece that Crenshawe had gotten off the railroad track the infinitesimal part of a second before the train struck him. When told he must die, he had promptly called for Edith.

As the girl knelt at his side, she tried to say something, but the situation was beyond words.

Crenshawe looked at her longingly. Never had he been more anxious to live than at that moment. "Edith," he said faintly but distinctly, "the doctor says I'm dying. The moment they try to move me, the end will come. You know I love you. Won't you marry me—before I go?"

The girl gasped and drew back. "I can't! Oh, I can't!" she cried.

But Crenshawe would not give up. "It's only for a few minutes," he pleaded.

But she shook her head. "I can't," she reiterated miserably. "I can't. I'm very fond of you, Frank, but I—I don't love you in that way, and—oh, it breaks my heart to refuse, but—you didn't know I was engaged to Mr. Hitchcock, did you?"

The light died out of Crenshawe's eyes. "No," he answered. "No."

But Edith hurried on. "Don't misunderstand me," she begged. "I am not engaged to him now. I gave him back his ring last night. But it isn't right. It can't be right."

Crenshawe's eyes flashed. "Broken off!" he exclaimed. "Then—Oh, yes, yes; it is right, Edith. It—it isn't as if I were going to live. And it would let me die happy, believing I had helped you. Money is a useless thing sometimes—when a man is dying, for instance—but it helps while one lives. You mustn't mind if I say that I know you have needed it sometimes, and that I want you never to need it again. But—but I'm afraid there is only one way to make sure. I've got some rather hard kinfolk, and I'm afraid they would try to break any will I made. But if you'll marry me—here, now——" He broke off and gazed pleadingly into the girl's face. "It would be only for a little while, dear, and it would make me very happy," he finished weakly.

Edith had grown very pale. Jack Hitchcock's handsome, flushed face rose before her as it had looked when he had bade her an angry good-by less than twenty-four hours before. It seemed to beg her not to do this thing—to wait and trust to him. And yet—and yet——

She had known Frank Crenshawe

all her life. If it had not been for Jack, she might have loved him, and no one knew better than she what his money would be to her.

She and her mother were poor—if poverty is measured by one's inability to have the things one's friends have. They lived in a cheap apartment, and kept only one half-trained maid. More than anything else Edith's mother deplored the half-trainedness of that maid. But she came cheap, and Mrs. Norcross could not afford a better one. Her one hope in life was that she might keep her social barque afloat till Edith should make a good marriage—"good" having but one significance in her vocabulary—and she put up with the incompetent maid and with many other unpleasantnesses because to do so enabled her to hold out a little longer.

Jack Hitchcock was poor and Frank Crenshawe was rich, but Edith loved Hitchcock, and she did not love Crenshawe. She had known him too long and too well—he seemed a brother rather than a lover. And now he was dying; he had given his life to save that of one dear to her; and he wanted to marry her and make her rich. In spite of herself, the thought of all that his money would mean to her rose in her mind.

Meanwhile the moments were flying; and Crenshawe was waiting, anxious eyes fixed upon hers.

"I won't bother you long, dear," he insisted once more, a little grimly this time.

Edith looked at him. "It isn't that," she answered slowly. "It is——" She paused; one cannot dissect motives or split hairs with the dying. "Let it be as you wish," she finished.

Only a few moments after Edith Norcross became Edith Crenshawe.

Crenshawe signed a brief will leaving his entire fortune to his "beloved wife."

And then, after all, he did not die! The doctor, it seemed, had been mistaken. The time came when it was morally certain that in a few weeks he would be as well and as strong as he had ever been.

Through all his illness Edith had done her duty by him—done it with apparent gladness. No doubt she *was* glad, for she and Crenshawe were very old friends. From the first she had stayed at his side, not attempting to interfere with the regular nurses, but being always at hand to help on his convalescence by a cheery word. No outsider suspected that she was an unhappy or an unwilling bride. Even Crenshawe, remembering dimly what she had said when he asked her to be his wife—even Crenshawe felt no real misgivings.

Then came the revelation. One morning, Crenshawe, sitting by the window, gathering strength in the September sunshine, remembered something that he had forgotten to tell Edith. She had just left him and had gone into her own room adjoining. Since the accident he had not walked unassisted, but now the notion took him to follow her and surprise her by his strength. He rose from his chair and limped triumphantly to her threshold; then paused, suddenly stricken.

The door was ajar. Through the crack he saw Edith, stretched across the table, face down, arms outflung, shoulders shaking with dry sobs. Faintly he heard the despairing words, "Oh, Jack! Jack! Jack!"

Dismayed, despairing, Crenshawe tottered back to his chair, where the doctor found him, collapsed, half an hour later.

During the days that followed he

fought the matter out with himself. He was no longer under any illusion. He knew that Edith had married him partly out of gratitude, partly out of pity, partly out of pique, partly, perhaps, for money. She had not married him because she loved him; and she had not expected him to live to claim her. And he had lived! What to do he did not know!

But first he must get well.

At last he did so. By that time silence in regard to his marriage had grown into a habit hard to break. Yet it must be broken. The matter must be threshed out or both his life and Edith's would be wrecked.

It was Edith who brought matters to an issue. They were talking on some indifferent subject, but the thoughts of both were far away. Edith was speaking, but the syllables came more and more slowly, and at last they stopped. "Oh!" she cried, in a sudden despairing outburst. "Oh! This must end! I can't bear it any longer."

Crenshawe flushed, then he paled. "Yes, it must end," he echoed quietly. "I have done you a great wrong, and I must do what I can to repair it. If I were the hero of a romantic novel, the solution would be easy. I would shoot myself and thus set you free to marry Jack——"

"Oh!"

"But I am not the hero of a novel. I am just a plain man, who has gotten himself and the woman he loves into a snarl by his selfishness——"

"Oh!"

"Yes, it *was* selfish, Edith, and I ought to pay for it. I'm only sorry that you will have to pay, too. I don't feel a bit like shooting myself—he smiled sadly—"and I'm afraid it wouldn't mend matters if I did."

Edith shook her head slowly. "No, it wouldn't mend matters," she

agreed; "and it wouldn't be fair. It's just like you to take the blame, Frank, but it doesn't belong to you. You did nothing but what was kind and generous. The fault was mine."

"Yours?"

"Yes. Oh, let's be honest this once. Don't try to gloze the truth because I am a woman. We've known each other for nearly twenty years; surely we can speak as equals for once. The fault was mine, but you must help to pay the penalty. I had no right to marry you for your money when I loved another man."

"Edith!"

"I did it. Oh, you big men, you splendid, trustful American men! How you idealize us women! You think us good, noble, pure-minded, unmercenary. You are wrong. We women want the fleshpots even more than men do. Only, we have learned to conceal our wishes. I want money—all my life I have wanted it. But I have had no way to get it except by marrying it. When the chance came I took it. That is the truth of it. Despise me for it." She ceased, panting.

Crenshawe stared at her in wonder. "Despise you?" he echoed. "Despise you? Nonsense! I don't believe you!"

"Why not?"

"Several reasons. First place, I've known you too long."

"You think you have. You never knew the real me."

"Oh, yes, I did. The best proof is what you have just said. Nobody as mercenary as you say you are would have confessed it."

"I confess because I am miserable. I sold myself. It was nothing else. I didn't love you. I married you because—yes, I'll be fair to myself—partly because I was grateful to you and wanted to please you, but mostly because I thought of all I

could do for Jack with your money. There you have the whole shameful truth!"

"Not quite all, I think." Crenshawe's face was gray with pain, but he spoke calmly. "Not quite all. You are saying things you don't quite mean, just because you are worn-out. You've been under a cruel strain, little girl, and you're mightily close to a nervous breakdown. Don't I know it? There isn't any question of blame between us. We are not lovers; we are just two old, old friends who have gotten into a snarl and are seeking a way out. We will find one, never fear!"

The girl looked up, a flash of hope on her face. "You mean——"

"I mean that there are ways out. The simplest is to have our marriage annulled."

"Annulled!"

"Yes; it can be done easily. I don't mean that we can be divorced. Divorce isn't necessary. Our marriage isn't a real marriage. Marriage is more than a few words said by a minister. I am not a lawyer, but I am sure that any court in the land would declare our marriage null and void—no marriage at all. You would be entitled to alimony——"

"What?"

"Certainly. To a very large sum—one-third of my estate, I believe, under the New York law. Then you and Jack could marry and——"

"Stop!" With blazing eyes the girl tottered to her feet. "Stop! I may be vile, but I am not quite so vile as that! And you think that of me! Frank! Frank!"

Crenshawe laughed gently. "So you didn't tell me quite all, after all," he remarked, quizzically.

Edith's eyes rounded. For a moment she groped for the explanation. Then she found it. A look of wondering surprise dawned in her face.

"Why! Why!" she sighed, almost happily, and dropped back into her chair. "Why," I don't believe I am as bad as I thought I was!"

"I know you're not!" Frank laughed outright. Edith could not see how great an effort it required.

"But—but how did you know, Frank? How could you know?"

"I knew you—the real you! Well, if you don't like that way out of our trouble, we must consider another. Don't you think you could learn to— to care for me?"

The smile faded from Edith's lips, and the hope went out of her eyes. Slowly she shook her head. "I'm afraid I can't, Frank," she said. "I do love you now, but not in that way. There's nobody like you in all the world—not even Jack. For years and years you've been everything to me—everything! Why, I haven't had a single trouble in all my life, from the time I broke my first doll till to-day, that you haven't stood ready to help me. You are the dearest, sweetest fellow in the world. But—but I *love* Jack."

Her tones were awed.

Crenshawe said nothing. He saw that she had more to say.

"Jack isn't half the man you are, Frank," she went on. "I know it perfectly. But I love him! I love him! Oh, Frank, Frank! Why do we women have hearts? Why can't we love where we should? Why can't I love you? Everything would be so simple if I could."

"Yes, dear; everything would be very simple then. Well? Shall I go away, Edith—on business, of course—and forget to come back?"

"Oh, no, no! Don't leave me!" The girl started up in terror. "Oh, no! Please don't leave me. I should die if you left me!"

Crenshawe smiled. He had not had the least idea of going away. "Then——" he began.

But the girl broke in. "Frank," she exclaimed, "perhaps—perhaps I might learn to love you, after all, if you'll give me time. It's only Jack that's in the way, you know. He fills my heart now so that there's no room for any one else. But perhaps in time I can get over it—if you'll help me. 'When half gods go, the gods arrive,' you know. I'll try very hard if you'll give me time and help me! Will you, Frank?"

"You know I will, Edith."

"And I may come to you and tell you when the pain gets very bad?"

"Yes, Edith."

"It won't be altogether easy for you," warned the girl. "I'll be pretty bad sometimes, and when I am I'm afraid I'll hurt you. I'm hurting you now, I know. Every word I'm saying must hurt you. Oh, Frank, Frank! I'm not worth it."

"Oh, yes, you are; mighty well worth it. So it's a bargain, is it?"

"Yes, it's a bargain."

A bargain it was, loyally carried out on both sides, even though the pain sometimes seemed too great to bear. Edith found occupation in managing Crenshawe's big house and in entertaining, while Crenshawe found distraction in his daily work. But often he would go home to find Edith crumpled down in a corner of a sofa or in an armchair, shuddering, sobbing. Often he would be summoned home over the telephone by a small pitiful voice begging for help. Always he gave it, at what cost to himself, no one knew. If, after a while, Edith grew less despairing, the number of her calls upon him did not decrease.

Jack Hitchcock had been a visitor at their house from the first. He had been a friend of Crenshawe's and Edith's for years, and their marriage made no difference, at least, so far as the surface was concerned.

Hitchcock accepted the situation, and came and went like any other friend. Besides, both Edith and Frank thought it best. "I want to contrast him with you, Frank," the girl had said. "It may help some."

Weeks grew into months, and conditions did not change. Frank was as tender as ever, but hope was slowly dying in his heart.

Then came the election. Jack Hitchcock was nominated for district attorney on the reform ticket. Edith read the news in the papers and went to Frank with it. "Can't you help him, Frank?" she asked wistfully. "I—I think I owe it to him."

"Help him!" Crenshawe repeated the words vaguely. "Oh, yes, of course. Certainly I'll help him."

Edith looked at him strangely. "You're always paying my debts, aren't you, Frank?" she questioned gravely.

"It's the inalienable privilege of the American husband," returned Crenshawe lightly.

Edith did not answer. It occurred to her that paying was the only privilege this American husband had ever had.

Crenshawe plunged into the reform campaign. For reform itself he cared little, feeling that it seldom lived up to its promises. But about Edith he cared a good deal. It occurred to him that Hitchcock had always been the "under dog"; perhaps to put him on top might break the spell. He put himself at Hitchcock's service; day after day and night after night he carried Hitchcock in his automobile from hall to hall, listened to Hitchcock's speeches, and led the applause at Hitchcock's periods. It was hard; it was especially hard when Edith went along and clapped her gloves to tatters. He did not know that her applause was more and more due to

self-condemnation. Hitchcock did not shine as an orator, nor stand very high among men.

The last Saturday night of the campaign came; Sunday and Monday were to be days of rest, and on Tuesday was to be the balloting. Hitchcock was on his way to make his last speech. He and Edith were on the back seat of the automobile; Crenshawe and the chauffeur on the front. The car, driven rapidly, shot across the surface tracks and darted up the Bowery. As it passed close to a newsstand beneath the elevated railway steps, a girl of eight or ten ran out in front of it. The car caught her and flung her a dozen feet.

The chauffeur doubled himself across wheel and brakes. Crenshawe, not waiting for the car to stop, made a splendid vault clear to the street. Hitchcock stood up, clutching the back of the seat in front of him, and gazing panic-stricken at the helpless little body and then at the gathering crowd. Finally he followed Crenshawe to the pavement. Edith scrambled after him.

As Crenshawe stood up with the child in his arms, the crowd closed in. From every side voices assailed him. Men shook their fists in his face and shouted abuse. Another crowd had closed in around the automobile, threatening the chauffeur. "Lynch 'em! Kill the money-bugs!" rose the cries.

Crenshawe did not heed them. Holding the child, he turned toward the machine, and found Edith by his side.

"Give her to me," she ordered.

Crenshawe's heart dropped even lower than it had been. To his anguish for the child was added fear for Edith. The crowd was very threatening. But there was no time for argument.

"Get back into the car," he ordered. "Quick!" Then to the crowd: "Out of the way, there! We must get this child to the hospital."

Sullenly the crowd gave way, letting the three pass. A big man in muddy clothes trod on Crenshawe's heels. "You don't get away!" he shouted. "You for the police station! Ain't I right, friends?"

"Sure!" echoed the crowd. "Lynch the murderers!"

Edith climbed into the car and took the child in her arms. As Crenshawe tried to follow, a woman burst through the throng. At sight of the child she began to scream.

Crenshawe lifted her into the car and sprang up in front. "To Bellevue Hospital, quick!" he ordered. "Here!"—to the crowd. "Here's the child's mother. Get out of the way."

Very quickly they were at the hospital. As they drove in the child opened her eyes; and two minutes later a surgeon declared that her injuries were trifling. Crenshawe gave his name and address, and quieted the mother by assurances of care and proper compensation.

It was not until they were again on the street that Crenshawe started.

"Good Lord!" he exclaimed. "Where's Hitchcock?" He looked at Edith.

The girl did not answer. The chauffeur, however, was less reticent. He had been badly frightened and badly shocked, and he had not had time to get over it.

"The damned cur ran," he snarled. "He jumped and ran! The coward!"

"Peters!" Crenshawe's tones brought the man to his senses.

"He did! He did!" he repeated sullenly.

Crenshawe glanced at Edith apologetically, "I'm sorry, Edith," he said. "You mustn't blame Hitchcock too much. He probably remembered that if he were recognized it might hurt the ticket, and so he thought it best to get away."

"Don't apologize!" The girl's color was high and her eyes bright with anger. "Don't apologize! Peters is right. The damned cur *did* run. I saw him."

And after that, nothing remained to be said.



A GERMAN PROPHECY COME TRUE

BY COLONEL H. FROBENIUS

[The book, soon to be published in this country, from which this article is taken, appeared in Germany just a few days before war was declared. The writer, an officer in the German army, was warmly commended by the Crown Prince for his work.—EDITOR.]

IT is remarkable that Homer Lea, in his work "THE DAY OF THE SAXON," makes absolutely no mention of France. That is rather humiliating for the latter, as it excludes France from any competition with the British Empire. She has lost all importance on the sea as regards England since the latter succeeded in the Eighteenth Century in beating her navy and wresting from her her considerable colonial possessions which were just beginning to flourish. The fact that France has, in the meantime, acquired considerable new possessions in other parts of the globe does not seem to trouble her former enemy, Great Britain, as the latter has been able to retain a certain superiority. It was under this pressure that France had to give up her rights in Egypt and her designs on a colonial empire right across Africa from Senegambia to the Red Sea (Abyssinia) at the very moment when she thought she had effected the connection with her Eastern possessions by means of Fashoda. This was the only case in which her efforts to expand came into conflict with the British Empire, and the latter lost no time in putting a spoke in her wheel with brutal emphasis.

Although this treatment by the Island Empire in 1898 was deeply resented by France as a national outrage, the impression very rapidly disappeared and was lost to view behind the desire of revenge against

Germany, which has prevailed since 1871, on England stepping forward to help her in the Morocco question. What is the reason for this hatred of the German Empire, which, based on revenge, causes all other matters in France to be relegated to the background whenever there is a demand for its settlement?

The French pretend to attribute it to the ancient contest between the Gauls and the Germans about the western bank of the Rhine. In order to justify the robbery of Alsace and Lorraine from Germany by Louis XIV they have put their own interpretation on history and have so stubbornly stuck to it in the schools that not only the French but also the inhabitants of the Reichsland, who derive their instruction from them, are completely permeated with this idea: i.e., since the partition of the Empire of Charlemagne—who is treated by them as a French monarch—the Reichsland has been a shuttlecock between the princes and the nations so that it could never rest in peace and fully develop until King Louis XIV took pity on it and incorporated it in his Empire, when it was enabled to enjoy peace and the blessings of civilization. Even if this were so, and it is quite contrary to all historical facts, it could not be denied that the population of the Reichsland was and still is to-day entirely German and not Gallic. In addition, the Alsatians and Lorrainers have never

been acknowledged as entitled to full equal rights in France. On the contrary, they have ever been treated as subjects of foreign origin, and have been held up to ridicule and contempt.

But the defeats of 1870-71, which terminated in the reunion of the Reichsland, deeply wounded the French nation in its tenderest spot, its vanity. That is the root of her indelible hatred. She could get over the destruction of her navy by England, and the loss of her colonies, as she still retained her superiority on land, which was created by Louis XIV and raised by Napoleon I to the utmost possible limits on the Continent; from that date the "Grande Nation" considered herself as the impartor of culture, the ruling power in Europe. When her boastful arrogance under Napoleon III was met by the unexpected resistance of Germany, and the latter country (formerly despised for her division into little states and dismemberment, and jeered at for her want of civilization and culture) rose in determined unity and unexpected might and capacity not only on the battle-field but also in industry and commerce, in art and science, and herself took the lead, then the French nation, discovered in its weakness and ousted from the throne of its presumptuous might, was deeply hurt in its vanity. *Hinc illæ lacrimæ.*

The fighting powers of the inhabitants of the Reichsland are of some importance in view of the fanatical wish to win it back, as they are the descendants of old German races distinguished for their courage, who have always preserved warlike inclinations and virtues. They have furnished the French Army with many of its best soldiers and most celebrated generals. The approximately two million people of the Reichsland are of importance having

regard to the decrease in the population of France, and would be of substantial assistance as regards the deficiency in officers in particular, if entry to the French Army were again open to the inhabitants of the Reichsland.

In spite of a noticeable temporary cessation of the hostile spirit (which does not prevail all over France and to an equal degree amongst the whole population), the French Government, whatever views it may have held, has always persisted in completing and perfecting her army and fortifications. That is to be attributed to two reasons: sufficient protection of the open frontier left after the loss of the Rhine frontier, and the endeavor to keep her own active force on an equal footing with the German Army. A chain of four strong ring fortresses was built on the 250 kilometers (155 miles) of the German frontier on the Meuse and the Moselle, of which the two barrier chains of Verdun-Toul and Epinal-Belfort serve as defensive positions on the wings and flank the gaps of Verdun-Longwy (50 kilometers wide, 31 miles) and Toul-Epinal (70 kilometers, 43.4 miles). Primarily designed to support the advance of the French Army against the much more rapidly mobilizable German Army, these fortresses, now that the French hope to mobilize more quickly than we do, constitute a great stronghold in a war commencing by an offensive movement. The position of Verdun-Toul in particular is extremely favorable for a defending army in consequence of its situation on the edge of the Cote de Meuse, from which steep declivities descend to the opposite plain, and this would certainly have to be penetrated by us. When Italy joined the German-Austrian League the Alpine frontier had to be more strongly protected against the former; and

therefore an abnormally strong fortress consisting of pass-barriers and strong defensive positions was erected in this neighborhood which not only defends all the roads over the mountains but also numerous by-roads. Finally they had to obviate the possibility of an invasion of German troops in violation of Belgium's neutrality or penetrating by way of Switzerland, so that the resisting powers of their old fortresses on these frontiers had to be improved and strengthened. Thus France has kept up a line of fortifications on the whole of her eastern frontier some 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) long, which should stay a surprise invasion of a hostile force. It will be quite impossible in any future war to pass these fortresses without paying them any attention as in 1870.

The erection and constantly necessary repair and modernization of these fortifications could very well be carried out by means of the necessary large grants which have always been forthcoming. But the maintenance of the army on the same basis as the German Army was a more difficult matter, as this could not be attained by mere expenditure, however lavish, but only through numbers, and of that France possessed no such superfluity as she did of money. As long ago as the 'seventies she had fallen behind Germany. With approximately the same area she had at home in 1875 only 36,900,000 against Germany's 42,700,000 inhabitants. Since then her population has only increased by 7.6 per cent. to 39,700,000, whereas Germany has reached 67,500,000, an increase therefore of 58 per cent. Consequently France could not keep pace with Germany in the annual embodiment of recruits even by constantly lowering physical requirements. She was compelled to reduce the strength of the units—in the first instance of

the companies—so as to maintain the same number of battalions and afterwards also to employ men of inferior physique, substituting them for many who were engaged on indoor work, as orderlies, etc.

But owing to the small number of recruits the number of efficient soldiers who could be called upon for mobilization showed a deficiency after taking into account the reserves of the German Army. If universal service had been enforced to the same extent in Germany as in France the German Army would have had an enormous advantage in trained troops. But the increase in size of German battalions and consequently in the number of recruits has not kept pace with the increase in the population, so that the balance was not disturbed to any considerable extent. This would enable France to obtain an advantage, at any rate temporarily, should she succeed in bringing her standing army up to a higher figure than is at the disposal of her eastern neighbor. The number of trained men capable of being added to the recruits in case of war could of course not be increased, and her neighbor's preponderance in effectives could not be disputed, but the prolongation of service with the colors from two to three years secured an addition to the standing army of at least 200,000 men and the further advantage of a much more thorough training than is possible in Germany, not only of the men in general but also of those who aspire to become officers of the reserve, who are also kept for three years.

After the introduction of the three years' term of active service the French standing army reached a strength of non-commissioned officers and privates of 768,300 (inclusive of 80,000 army service corps, 24,000 gendarmes and 31,300 colonials), whereas our army had only 619,000,

and even with the large increase which brought us near to universal service again, we have not yet quite overhauled the French, as we have only about 751,000 troops with the colors.

The three-year term of service was carried out in a peculiar manner not without importance for the next few years. As those born in 1890 who were in the second year of service refused to remain a year longer, and voiced their sentiments by gross acts of mutiny, it was decided to discharge them in the autumn of 1913 and to embody two annual drafts of recruits at one and the same time: namely, those born in 1892 and 1893. Consequently, two annual drafts will have to be trained at the same time by means of those who have already served one year, a state of affairs which will make it almost impossible for the French Army to engage in war at the present moment. But as the commencement of service was put back a year, *i.e.*, from the year of completion of the twenty-first year to the previous one in order legally to carry out the premature embodiment of the 1893 series, those born in 1894 will have to be called up in 1914. And as those of 1891 who are now in their second year are bound for three years, it will probably be possible to keep them for 1915 also. Consequently it will be possible to have not only three but even four annual drafts in the standing army next year, *i.e.*, a greater battalion strength than is required on a war footing. Mobilization could accordingly be effected much more easily and rapidly, as not only would the various units possess their war strength, but they would be able to tell off a considerable number to form the basis of a reserve army.

France will once again in 1916 have the opportunity of playing the same game, as the two annual drafts

called out in 1913 will not be discharged till the autumn of that year. If by that time she has not attained the object of her mighty preparations, and has not succeeded in dragging Russia and England with her in an attack on Germany, she will have temporarily to forego her war of revenge if she does not want to be ruined commercially.

The condition of France due to universal three years' service is nothing less than a continuous state of readiness for war. Even if a wealthy country can bear the financial sacrifice required for this state of affairs—the personal sacrifice becomes too great, having regard to the fact that not only is the peasant torn for so long a period from his plough and the artisan from his trade, but the whole youth of the country, whose scientific or technical education is of indispensable importance to the State, must have its studies interrupted for three whole years, and has got to commence again at the beginning. This youthful energy uselessly sacrificed to the idea of *revanche* would avenge itself most bitterly if it were not actually used up for the war of revenge. *Therefore it follows from the military measures of France, that she will have to insist on war against Germany in the year 1915 or in any case in 1916.*

But France is not content with having more than 2 per cent (including officers) of the whole population in her standing army. She is endeavoring to get auxiliary forces from her colonies so as to be able to attain the necessary superiority in numbers without the assistance of other countries. As long ago as 1870 the "most civilized" nation drew into the ranks against us all sorts of savages from Africa, but even more can be done in this direction. In Algiers, Senegambia, and the West-

ern Soudan especially, there is a population estimated at about thirty millions which can be of considerable assistance, and the aims of their colonial administration are primarily directed to this purpose. A German traveler who is very well acquainted with the conditions in the Soudan confirms this in the following words: "Neither commercial nor colonization schemes are sufficiently encouraged. On the contrary, their political efforts are directed to making the colony subsist on black power, black intelligence, and black money, and to produce French citizens of black blood by thousands, hundreds of thousands and millions. And, naturally, all these millions are to furnish good, enthusiastic, and patriotic French soldiers."

There are already twenty-eight battalions of so-called Senegal Guards in existence, and every year sees an increase in the planned organization. These black troops can, of course, not be transplanted to a European climate just as they are; nevertheless the attempt to make use of them on the North Coast of Africa gave apparently good results, so that the European or Arab troops stationed there will undoubtedly be transferred to the European theater of war and be replaced by Senegal Guards, and it may even be possible to bring over the blacks who have been acclimatized on the North Coast of Africa. In any case they will possess very considerable forces in the Soudan for the purpose of making an attack against our African colonies by the routes laid out thence and from Equatorial Africa, and attempting to take them from us, which would be well worth their while. There are already 20,000 men ready for such an enterprise.

The activity with which preparations for war are being conducted in Algiers may be gathered from the

constant increase of the Algerian battalions of Guards which are to be increased from five to forty-eight by annual additions, and which are already thirty-nine in number. But in addition to her African colonies France has looked for assistance elsewhere so as, notwithstanding her own want of men, to overhaul the strength of Germany's forces. Aborigines have been brought from the Antilles, it is true only to succumb in great numbers in the South of France. They were consequently shipped off to Algiers, but even there the climate did not seem to suit them. But after such attempts we should not be surprised if, during the next war, the German troops were confronted with Annamites and inhabitants of Madagascar and Cambodia.

In the year 1912 the number of trained French troops available was stated as between four and one-half and four and three-quarter millions, *i.e.*, 11.3 to 12 per cent of the whole population. As not more than 17 or 18 per cent of males can be considered as of serviceable age, it follows that, after mobilization of such a number, only children, old men, and weaklings would be left for civil purposes. That would mean that all civil occupations would be at a standstill for the purpose of carrying on a war in such numbers. But as this is absolutely impossible in the interests of the army we had better not reckon on such an exorbitant number. Russia, with her 190,000,000 of inhabitants can submit to such a sacrifice of men, but not France.

In any case the French army, or rather the French armies if the number of army corps is doubled by the embodiment of reserves, will, even without the territorial army and its reserve, require such a large area for its operations that the Franco-German frontier would be much too

short to allow it to pass through at one and the same time; thus one army will have to be employed behind the other or the outlets will have to be increased and widened.

And here the question of Belgium becomes of first importance. Her sympathy with France is so well known that she can hardly be expected to offer any opposition to a march through her territory which as a neutral state it is really her duty to do. At any rate this would be a dangerous game for Belgium to play, as whatever the result might be it would probably put an end to her independence. But England also appears, as we have seen, to count on disembarking her expeditionary army at Antwerp. And they would have to join forces with the French in neutral territory—naturally under the pretext of protecting Belgium against the rapacious German Army even if the latter's troops had not yet set foot on neutral territory.

Homer Lea gives us some points with respect to neutrality which are very significant of Anglo-Saxon ideas. He thinks that the occupation of neutral territory, such as Holland and Belgium, might call forth violent opposition in England in case of a war with Germany. "That is unjustified," he says, "as the British Empire can make no impression by the sanctification of neutrality. This only forms a means of withdrawing from responsibility and imposing it on those nations who give way to the self-deception that such declarations of neutrality are inviolable. And in that respect no nation has more frequently violated neutral territory nor has any nation more often excused itself from the duty of observing neutrality than the British. . . . Should the Anglo-Saxons occupy these frontiers that will only mean territorial but not a moral violation of the neutrality of

those countries. . . . Neutrality of countries under such conditions has never been and never will be a factor to be reckoned with in a war between the nations. That kind of neutrality is a modern illusion and indicates eccentric aberration." But I do not believe that England will exhibit the opposition assumed by Homer Lea to a violation of neutrality. I rather think that his opinions will be shared there.

France has, in the course of the last few decades, which she has undoubtedly devoted to preparing for war against Germany, had to suffer many disappointments: she has been overtaken by us in the construction of guns, and the discovery of her much vaunted smokeless powder has been a fiasco. When the Lebaudy was proudly reckoned as the sole unrivaled airship of the world, there appeared simultaneously in Germany no less than three air dirigibles all of which proved to be faster than the French one, and when the French applied themselves with great enthusiasm to the construction and development of flying-machines their triumph was short-lived, as the German machines were able to show similar results within a few years. The reasons lie in the natural qualities of the French: they are intelligent, inventive, courageous, and lay hold of a new idea with great skill and enthusiasm; but they are not careful workmen, and lack the untiring patience of the Germans, who, unlike the French, satisfied with a momentary success and then taking up something new, are not content with their results and are always striving to attain something better and more perfect.

But one weapon the French know how to wield with adroitness: the fostering of insurrection in our border country, the Reichsland. I must lay emphasis on the fact that in the

coming war, at any rate in the first days of preparation, this is destined to play a fatal part, but will not prove a blessing to the poor inhabitants if they do not resist this unholy influence.

A PRAYER TO PARNASSUS

BY JOHN KENDRICK BANGS

COME hither, Muse. A word within thine ear.
Why should we soar the loftier atmosphere,
'Mid currents crossed the Soul knows nothing of,
When here below we have such themes as Love,
And Joy, and Helpfulness, and Brotherhood,
And countless others quite as true and good?

Why seek the upper regions for our themes
When here on earth are things surpassing dreams—
The hills far-flung, with all their massy length,
Fit emblems of a vast, eternal strength;
And dreamy vales beneath them, safe from harms
Within the shadow of their circling arms?

The Sea, the Mill-Streams, and the Rivers fair,
That do man's bidding, and his burdens bear;
The acres broad, all teeming with the spoil
That comes to him who calls it forth with toil,
Until all-fruitful to man's hand we see
The earth a smiling, golden granary!

The love of lad for lass, of lass for lad;
The heart of man by woman's eyes made glad;
The gifts of life; the genius of the pen;
Earth's secrets yielding to the minds of men;
The eager thirst for learning, and the chase
For laurels won through service to the race!

Why soar to heights to please the studious few
When there be countless multitudes in view
Who thirst to hear the simpler songs they bring;
Whom God hath sent his promises to sing;
Who ask but some soft mitigating strain
To give Nepenthe to some hour of pain?

Let others sing for Pedants, O my Muse!
Let others seize the laurels that they choose
Who soar above, and soaring thither find
Some abstract note to thrill the wondering mind.
I am content to dwell on planes apart
And sing the simpler songs that reach the heart!

THE BETTER HUSBANDS CONTEST

BY ELLIS PARKER BUTLER

Author of "Pigs is Pigs," etc.

NOBODY, I'm sure, could ever have thought of the idea but Miss Tandy, for she always thinks of the *noblest* things to do, like investigating the plumbing of the proletariat and sending really edifying books to hospitals. And she does look so efficient and—*and* Minerva-like, with her hair brushed straight back and the first tortoise-shell rimmed glasses ever worn by a female in Riverbank.

I was trotting along to the Friday Auction Club, in a perfect glow of happiness because Richard had announced our engagement only a week before and my new two-piece suit was a perfect fit and I had just decided how to have my going-away dress made, when Miss Tandy caught me up. She catches everyone up, she has such an efficient stride, due partly to noble ambition and partly to not caring how wide her skirts are, while the rest of us have to mince along or have such slits in our skirts that we would be in danger of arrest.

"Oh! Miss Sophia!" I exclaimed, "have you heard that Dicky and I are to be married?"

"I heard it," she answered without a single congratulatory smile. It was quite as if she had said, "Another poor misguided lamb to the slaughter!"

"Isn't it glorious?" I cried. "Just to think of a splendid, big, noble fellow like Dicky picking out little me!"

"Nonsense!" she exclaimed. "It

is a thing that is happening every day, all over the world. The average husband——"

"But Dicky won't be an average husband," I said. "Dicky will be the very best husband in the world. He is so fine, and splendid, and noble——"

"I hope so," she said, in a tone like a Number Six, English last, flat-soled shoe coming down on a stone pavement. "I'll observe the future with interest. I have been giving husbands some attention."

She didn't mean it that way. She mean't it in the same sense she would have meant "I have been giving the plumbing of the proletariat some attention."

"The average husband is an untutored beast," she said with vigor. "What specialized education has your Dicky had to fit him to be a husband? You went to cooking-school, didn't you? You took a course in domestic economy, didn't you? You have fitted yourself to be a wife, haven't you? You can sew? You can cook? What can Dicky do?"

"He can—he can——" I said. I couldn't remember anything very special in the husband line that Dicky *could* do. "He can earn his own living," I said proudly.

"So could you, if you wished," said Miss Tandy. "Where are you going now?"

"Mrs. Middleton's. The Auction Bridge meets there."

"I am on my way there," said Miss

Tandy. "I asked them if I could come, and they said I could. They were not enthusiastic."

"Oh, I am so glad you are going to learn Auction!" I said. "They will need another hand while—while Dicky and I are on our trip. I know you'll love it."

"Bridge! Fudge!" said Miss Tandy. "I have better things to do than waste my time over senseless games. Some of the husbands of the poorer classes are shocking creatures."

I had no doubt they were but I did not dig into the subject then because I was not especially interested in the husbands of the poorer classes. Even the plumbing of the proletariat does not interest a girl with a brand-new engagement ring and such a hurry-up-please fiancé as Dicky is. And we were at Mrs. Middleton's door.

We went in and Miss Tandy was received with gentle regret well hidden under politeness. She refused to take off her hat, probably because it would lead to the unnecessary labor of putting it on again, and why waste time in such trivial matters when the proletariat is still suffering from enclosed plumbing and coal in the bath tubs? Miss Tandy stood in the middle of the floor, hat and all, and addressed all of us.

"You all have husbands, except Dolly, and she will have one soon," said Miss Sophia, "and you represent the best society of Riverbank, and that is why I am here. The average husband of the poorer classes is poor stuff. I have seen him, and I know. Three-fourths of the misery of the poorer classes is due to the poor quality of the average husband."

"Some of them—dear me!" said Mrs. Middleton, raising her hands. "Such husbands!"

"Exactly!" said Miss Tandy. "And why are they so? Because no

attention has been given to their improvement. The world lets a woman take a husband and then forgets him. It does nothing to uplift and better him. It raises up no standard for him to strive to equal. He has no incentive."

"And often," said Mrs. Bigelow, "he takes to drink and beats the poor creature. I have read about it in the newspapers."

"Unfortunately," said Miss Tandy, "I have no husband. If I had I would have trained him to be such a standard. That is why I have come here. You, who have husbands, must take the lead in the great work of reform. You must start the campaign for Better Husbands."

She looked around the circle. Everyone seemed puzzled. I felt a tremor of fear and hoped Miss Tandy had not come to get the Auction Bridge Club to band together to insist that I have a better husband than Dicky. She had not.

"The only way to have Better Husbands among the poorer classes," said Miss Tandy, "is to arouse the competitive instinct and play upon the instinct of pride. We must make wives proud of good husbands and ashamed of bad husbands. I have induced the Better Husbands League of America to donate a gold medal and a silver medal and a bronze medal to be awarded to the best and the next best and the third best husbands in Riverbank. We will have a Better Husbands Contest and Exhibition in the town hall and——"

"Oh, dear Miss Sophia!" I begged, "Please don't have the contest until Dicky and I get back from our wedding trip! I know Dicky will win the gold medal!" "Someone will win it," said Miss Tandy, noncommittally. "The best husband exhibited will win it. But, in order to arouse interest in all classes we must have entries

from such as the ladies forming this club. That is why I am here."

"It is a perfectly lovely idea!" exclaimed Mrs. Middleton enthusiastically. "I will enter Mr. Middleton. He is one of the best husbands in——"

"I will enter George against any husbands in the world," said Mrs. Bigelow. "For twenty years he has never forgotten to put out the cat or lock the door and——"

"Augustus will be there," said Mrs. Catherton grimly. "Augustus never opposes my wishes."

They were all enthusiastic. Mrs. Briggs and Mrs. Diggles and Mrs. Van Dolsen and Mrs. Featherby and Mrs. Pelk and Mrs. O'Carthy and both Mrs. Vogels and Mrs. Trainor, and all the rest, were wildly eager for the contest to occur.

"But, please, please, Miss Tandy, don't have the contest until Dicky and I get back!" I begged. "I want Dicky to win that medal."

"I presume the number of years of husbanding will count for something," said Mrs. Bigelow rather squelchingly. "Your Dicky will be a very new broom, my dear child. That will be taken into account, Miss Tandy?"

"Of course," said Miss Tandy. "An unprejudiced committee will judge all husbands. Charts will be furnished, with the proper percentages for various merits. A husband winning one hundred points would, of course, be a perfect husband. And, of course, none would win one hundred points."

"Oh!" exclaimed all the ladies, and I exclaimed it louder than all the rest. Then we all said, in a chorus—"My husband would win one hundred points."

"You see," said Miss Tandy, with pleasure tingeing her pale cheek with red, "how it arouses the competitive instinct? Even the wives whose hus-

bands lose this year will try to have them win next year. The husbands will try to be better husbands in order to win next year. The effect on the proletariat——"

"Can we enter our husbands now?" asked Mrs. Briggs eagerly.

"Immediately!" said Miss Tandy.

"Then I'll enter Dicky," I said, "and if you have the contest before we return I'll never forgive you, Miss Sophia! Never! How many points does time of husbanding count?"

"Four points," said Miss Tandy, referring to a list she had in her hand. "Except that a divorced husband's years with his second wife does not count. Divorce is a sign of a poor husband and——"

"Beg pardon?" said Mrs. Pelk.

"A husband if ever divorced loses the four points," said Miss Tandy.

"Then," said Mrs. Pelk arising and leaving the room, "you will please consider that I will have nothing more to do with the silly affair."

"Dear me!" said Mrs. Middleton, "I didn't know she was a second wife. I wonder if she thought a divorced man could compete with a steady husband? Go on Miss Tandy."

"The use of liquor in any form deducts six points," said Miss Tandy.

"One moment!" said Mrs. O'Carthy. "I wish to say I consider this contest the greatest nonsense of which I have ever heard! I wish you good day!"

So out she went. Miss Tandy went on.

"The hen-pecked husband loses five points," said Miss Tandy.

"I shall refuse to permit George to enter any such childish affair," said Mrs. Bigelow haughtily. "I thought from the first it was a crazy idea. If I had been given a chance to say a word I should have said so before this."

She withdrew with stately tread. Miss Tandy looked after her with surprise.

"Selfishness in money matters," she said, "will cost a contestant——"

"Pardon me!" said Mrs. Briggs, arising, and Mrs. Diggles said that if Mrs. Briggs was going her way she would walk with her; that it was easy to see that this whole affair was a fiasco.

Miss Tandy seemed annoyed.

"Sullenness and gruffness without apparent reason, anger when buttons are not sewed on, harsh words before breakfast and general bearishness will deduct five——"

"What nonsense!" said Mrs. Van Dolsen to Mrs. Featherby. "Do they expect husbands to be more than human? Even the best of men at times——"

"Of course they do!" said Mrs. Featherby. "I'm going your way, my dear, if you have heard enough of this silliness."

"Points are also deducted for staying late or going often to the club," said Miss Tandy, and both Mrs. Vogels departed, "for complaining about meals," and here Mrs. Trainor left, "for carelessness of dress," two more ladies left, "for coldness and seeming lack of affection," three more ladies departed, "for flirting——"

Mrs. Middleton was the only married person left, and it was her house, so she could not go away without unusual rudeness to Miss Tandy, so she set her lips in a hard line and glared.

"Points are also deducted for——" Miss Tandy went on, but Mrs. Middleton interrupted her.

"I presume," she said coldly, "you did not come here with the cold-blooded intent of breaking up my auction afternoon, but you seem to have done so, Miss Tandy. I think that will suffice, without reading

more of that impossible nonsense. It is evident that that list was made by someone that never knew what husbands are. Can't you see that you have insulted all the ladies, and that they have gone?"

"Dear me!" said Miss Tandy, "So they have! They have *all* gone."

"And what else can you expect when that list of marks has evidently been made out especially to hold our husbands up to ridicule as imperfect?" asked Mrs. Middleton. "I supposed that when you said Better Husbands you meant chest measurements, and height and weight, and that sort of thing. I certainly should not allow Mr. Middleton to enter any such contest. No indeed! None of this club's husbands would be allowed to enter such a contest. Never! Do you think they are angels? They are men—if you can call husbands that."

"But the proletariat?" said poor Miss Sophia. "How can we teach the proletariat husband to be better if we have no Better Husbands contestants from the—from the upper ranks? How can we have a contest if——"

"Oh, dear, dear Miss Sophia," I begged, "please don't have the contest until Richard and I return. I'll enter Richard. I know Dicky will win. If you'll just wait until we get back and——"

Suddenly Miss Tandy turned as red as fire. She was reading the small print at the head of the paper she held.

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "Oh, I've been a fool!" and she read what was printed at the head of the paper.

"Notice!" she read, "The particular attention of those wishing to hold contests in the Better Husbands Competition is called to the necessity of limiting such contests to husbands married within six months of the date of the contest. The entrance of

husbands of a year or longer standing invariably results in such low averages of merit that the contests serve to make the husbands of the lower classes feel self-satisfied and complacent. The object of the Better Husbands Competition is to bring to light the Perfect Husband as an example to others, and experience has taught us that the only husband even approaching perfection is the brand-new husband.' Well!"

"And you *will* wait until Dicky and I get back," I urged.

"I will!" she said grimly. "And I'll let each bride judge her own husband. I've got to exhibit a perfect husband. For the good of the proletariat."

"Well, of course," I said doubtfully, "Dicky isn't *quite* perfect, you know."

"No?" she asked, rather scornfully, I thought.

"No," I admitted, although I hated to say anything against dear Dicky, "he does have such poor taste in choosing his neckwear."



MISUNDERSTOOD

BY ANTOINETTE DeCOURSEY PATTERSON

DAY has a kindly, loving heart, they say,
 While night is made of cold and silent hours:—
 But often, after night has gone away,
 I've found her tears upon the grass and flowers.

THE DRAMA IN TOKYO

BY JESSIE E. HENDERSON

THEY played Shakespeare in Tokyo last summer.

Time was when Japanese theaters were content to be little one-story, quaint-gabled structures, hung with gay lanterns. The audience checked its shoes at the door, where Americans would check their hats, and shuffled to its respective cushions on the floor. Sometimes the cushions had low fences round them—the general effect being something like box-stalls. There was a raised aisle at one side of the auditorium down which the actors clattered to the stage—the blackness of the villain's heart was frequently gauged by the noise of his progress. Between acts the players strolled to and fro among the spectators. Fierce loyalties, patient hatreds, submissive loves—the history and romance of a proud and virile nation gave the drama its themes.

Now in all the extraordinary land of Japan there is no more extraordinary monument to the Japanese powers of assimilation, imitation, and modernization than the new Imperial Theater in Tokyo. A handsome, white stone building of semi-Grecian design, which would not look out of place beside the theaters of Paris, London, or New York, it violates in its architecture and in its performances nearly every tradition of the Japanese stage. And it plays "to capacity."

Oh, the old-fashioned theaters are not gone, and the old-fashioned plays are not dead. But with the electric car and the army aeroplane, high on the wave of Europeanism there has come a new theater and a new

drama, strangely blended of the old and the modern. The English-speaking peoples are in the forefront of civilization to-day. Shakespeare is the darling of the English. So Shakespeare was turned into Japanese, a company of Japanese actors donned Roman dress, the Japanese scenic painters created a Roman setting—and *Julius Caesar* coveted a crown and died the death at the Imperial Theater.

It was a dramatic moment in the literary history of Japan and in the history of literature. The "incredible swiftness" upon which *Cæsar* prided himself is fairly outdone by the headlong rush of Japanese advancement. When Shakespeare set about the task of writing "*Julius Cæsar*," Japan was hardly more than a line upon the charts of Elizabethan mariners. When Tokyo opened her port to foreign trade some fifty-seven years ago, *Julius Cæsar* and William Shakespeare were as vaguely known in the Flowery Kingdom as the Pilgrim Fathers or the daily newspaper. Even in the year of grace 1914 there stretches between the racial and national background of the Japanese and the racial and national background of the Caucasian a gulf wider than that between the Englishmen of Shakespeare's time and the Romans of *Cæsar's*. Yet Shakespeare was played, was well played, was intelligently played, in the Imperial Theater at Tokyo last summer. Moreover, he was to a very great extent appreciated.

Make-up accomplishes miracles. It is true that the slanting Oriental eyes of the guardsmen and of mem-

bers of the mob were not in character. It is true that the gestures of the minor personages were sometimes too dainty for sturdy Latins. But most of the principals actually found for themselves Roman countenances, and all the principals—easily making the transition from flowing kimono to flowing mantle—had the superb Roman manner.

It is not, however, the policy of the Imperial Theater management to give its patrons nothing but Shakespeare. In the long run, that would be bad business. And in a land which has a literature of its own, it would also be bad art. The old plays that stir the memory and the blood have their place on the list for the season, and side by side with these there is a strange new kind of drama.

One of the old plays was given at the Imperial Theater last spring. A company of finished actors—for these Japanese men and women can act!—portrayed the struggles of the "Forty-seven Ronins," those wanderers who were content to endure years of misery and degradation in order to avenge the death of their feudal lord. The story is overwhelming in its appeal to the emotions. It was presented with consummate skill. Even to the Europeans and Americans in the audience the advent of the "Forty-seven Ronins" at the Imperial Theater will always be memorable.

But in certain ways the every-day pieces at the Imperial Theater are more interesting to the foreign visitor than the introduction of Shakespeare or the revival of historical drama. The every-day pieces are the strange new ones, the mingling of Japanese and European, of oil and water. They are very true to life, the half-European, wholly Japanese life to which Nippon has awakened.

Visit the theater on a Sunday evening—a popular night. People are driving up to the door in carriages or automobiles or jinrickshas, or they are clacking thither afoot on their wooden clogs. They buy tickets at an ordinary ticket office, such as may be seen inside any American playhouse, and they pass up a flight of marble steps into a corridor which is like any theater corridor except that it is far handsomer than most. They are shown to their seats by girl ushers in gray uniforms and white aprons. The auditorium is precisely like that in an American theater except for the curtain. This is probably unique among all the stage curtains of the world. It represents two Japanese women picking blossoms in a flower garden, under a group of cherry trees—the whole picture done in embroidery so sumptuous, so delicately wrought, so lavish yet so tasteful in coloring that each detail stands out with the vivid, lifelike quality of a masterpiece in oils.

At six o'clock the curtain rises, gleams from the footlights shining on its soft pinks and yellows as it rolls slowly upward. Behind the footlights there stretches a road, and beyond it the sea. Down the road come a little group of men and women. The flimsy paper program, bright with reds and greens, explains nothing, except in Japanese. The young soldier in the next seat, who speaks a little English, can explain only that the piece is called "A Ragged Cloud." But ignorance of the actors' language is merely a slight handicap, since the actors speak so eloquently the universal language of tones and gestures. In the mind of the foreign spectator there may be confusion as to minor details of the plot. He may not know how the people got into the various situations, but he cannot fail

to know how they feel after getting into them. "A Ragged Cloud" is a tragedy. There is a young woman, very ill, on her way to a seaside sanitarium. She is dressed in the quiet gray-blue silk kimono affected by many women of the upper class. Some male relative—perhaps her father—and a maid accompany her. At the conclusion of the scene, when the doctor from the sanitarium comes to meet the invalid, the stage swings noiselessly round—the characters still talking—and another section of scenery with other characters swings into place.

That first scene is sufficient to show what the new drama is like. Some of the men wear kimonos. The doctor wears European clothes, a soft felt hat, a watch, and he carries a cane. Another man is dressed in the flowing drab skirt of the student. The women's roles are taken by women, instead of by boys.

In accordance with a convention of the Japanese stage the actresses speak in very high falsetto—a voice which requires long, hard practice. The actors pay but slight attention to the audience—one of the things that make their acting so lifelike. They act with directness, with simplicity, with repression, but with little facial expression. They are not afraid to permit many moments of absolute silence when action takes the place of dialogue.

Thus the old and the new are reconciled—ancient costumes, modern costumes; modern themes, ancient impassivity of countenance mingled with a rather modern freedom of gesture; modern women—so far as Japanese women are modern—ancient falsetto. This uniting of old and new does not seem to be an attempt to please the Japanese radicals and at the same time to placate the reactionaries. It is merely a remarkably truthful, perhaps an un-

consciously truthful, picture of Japan as it is to-day. It is holding the mirror up to nature.

When one of the later scenes in "A Ragged Cloud" has swung into place a young woman makes her way among the rocks and low fir trees along the beach, meets the doctor from the sanitarium, and flings herself upon him in an agony of love and broken pleading. He throws her from him. She drops to his feet, encircles his ankles with her arms, pours forth a torrent of entreaty. He extricates himself roughly, and leaves her. She weeps—just a choking sob or two. So poignant is her grief that sudden tears spring to the eyes of the audience—not excepting the eyes of Europeans and Americans. The young invalid from the sanitarium, she who appeared in the first scene, finds the heartbroken woman in time to prevent her leaping from a rock into the sea. The invalid listens to the girl's story, comforts her, offers protection—friendship. The male relative hurries to the beach, mad with anxiety over the invalid's absence. He refuses to let her befriend the young woman, but the invalid insists. As they argue, a splash is heard. The young woman has crept to the edge of the cliff and found a sure relief for her woes.

As the embroidered curtain descends there is a movement among the audience. People begin to leave the auditorium. Supper, it seems, is ready. Oh, admirable theater system, which starts its evening performance before the supper hour, affords a twenty-five minute intermission for supper, and, finally, supplies the supper—at a reasonable charge—in a handsome supper room within the theater building.

To the dining-room, therefore, the spectators retire. They discuss the play and a substantial supper of

soup, steak, vegetables, and ice cream—European food. There is time for the gentlemen to smoke their cigarettes and for the ladies to take a few whiffs from their tiny toy pipes before they leave the dining-room to watch the embroidered curtain rise again.

There is a sort of pulpit now, at the right of the stage, very near to the footlights. Upon a raised seat in front of the pulpit, their profiles toward the audience, squat two men clad in black silk robes that resemble those of Catholic priests. These men appear to be the Japanese "chorus." Like the ancient Greek chorus, they explain the plot. The stout man sings—or does he recite? Japanese recitation is not unlike Japanese singing—and the small man plays the Oriental equivalent of a guitar as accompaniment and occasionally adds a sustained vocal note or an exclamation to the other's song. The stout man takes himself seriously and is taken seriously by the audience. Twice his sense of the dramatic overcomes his composure, and he strikes the song-book with his fist as he brings out a resounding note.

"The Organ Grinder," to which the two musicians act as chorus, is chiefly pantomime. Once in a long while the characters utter a few sentences, but for the greater part of the time they are silent. The Organ Grinder's sister is a young geisha of whom a wealthy man has become enamored. She plans to elope with him at night, but as she walks softly through the dark house toward the door her brother wakes. His outcry summons the aged mother from an inner room. The lover is discovered waiting outside the gate. He enters the house.

Marriage has been no part of his plans, and the old mother, weeping softly in a corner, refrains from urging it upon him. Her unspoken

reproach together with the half sobbing attempts of the brother to carry off the whole affair as lightly as possible present a stronger argument to the heart of the lover than any words could have done.

As he sits moodily by himself, the girl, with averted face, begins to brew tea—tragedy or no tragedy, the laws of hospitality must be observed. The old mother still crouches in her corner. As a final desperate attempt to set everyone at ease, the Organ Grinder brings out his monkey and puts the animal through its little tricks. If the acting were less fine, this incident would be ludicrous. As it is, the incident adds the last touch of pathos. A sigh of real joy runs through the audience when the lover permits the mother to join his hand to the girl's as they drink tea, or whatever the rite is—it's a bit difficult for a foreigner to catch the details, though the import is clear—and to pronounce them formally betrothed, or maybe wedded. The moment is a dramatic one, full of emotion. Yet for ten minutes not a word has been spoken by the actors.

After sorrow comes laughter, in the form of a farce. It is called "The Secret" and has to do with a dog, an interfering friend, and a young married couple. The plot is not hard to guess, as the characters rush hither and yon. It is "Frenchy" in flavor, but it moves with a good deal of rapidity and wins much applause.

Down at the bottom of the program is a splash of green. This proves to be an announcement of a "European ballet." An orchestra with European musical instruments files into place. It begins to play.

Ta dum de *dum-dum*, de *dum-dum*—What IS that tune? "For I've got rings on (*dum!*) my fingers, (*dum-dum*)—bells on (*dum!*) my toes, (*de dum-dum*)—Elephants (*dum!*)

to ride upon (dum!)—Well, well, "O'Shay!" And is it yourself's in Tokyo! However did—whisht! Here's the ballet.

A pretty good ballet it is, too. In the center of the stage there is a revolving platform upon which a group of men, clad in tights and with hands and faces whitened, pose as classic statues under a shower of vari-colored lights. The ballet dancing is pretty, though it lacks spontaneity. For some inexplicable reason the girls in their low-cut bodices and fluffy, short skirts do not look "smart," but they do look attractive and they win unbounded favor.

Thus at somewhere near eleven p.m. ends the evening's entertainment at the Imperial Theater.

Other people have spent their evening at the "movies" over in Asakusa Park. Have the "movies" reached Japan? They have. Moreover, they haven't discovered America yet. In America they are "standies" or "sleepies." In Japan the "movies" do move. Drugged, robbed, abducted, set adrift in a leaky boat, drugged again, out-ri-valed by geisha girls, spirited away in an automobile, involved in an auto accident, drugged once more—this time, by way of variety, in a 'ricksha going as fast as the coolies could pull it—locked in a burning house, rescued by a fireman, driven to attempt harakiri, and finally betrothed to the hero, who turns out to be the fireman—these are the things that make up a busy day for one heroine of an Asakusa "movie."

If there was anything that did not threaten this particular heroine, it was because that particular disaster had not occurred to the Japanese mind. All "movie" heroines, the world over, lead adventurous lives. But the Japanese "movie" heroine

has a life that is just one thing after another.

To heighten the effect and make the blood of the audience run yet more cold, two or three men stood on the darkened stage and spoke the words that were supposed to fall from the lips of the "movies." Boys, employing the high falsetto, spoke the women's parts. The intervals between films were occupied by farces of the slapdash type—*A* introduced *B* into the house of dignified *C*, made absurd blunders in etiquette. Men and women spectators smoked while the heroine begged for mercy. After her rescue and betrothal they presented their door-checks, received their wooden shoes from the attendant—who does not have to be tipped!—and bowed an answer to the head usher who (American theater-managers please copy) said: "Thank you for coming."

Is the Asakusa motion picture crude? Does it indicate a nation with a childish mind? Then what is indicated by the fact that last winter an amateur theatrical club, members of which were people from the best families, gave Tokyo a taste of "Magda" and "Hedda Gabler?" Surely this was more radical than "Julius Cæsar." Japan is theatrically awake.

Wasn't it in the year 1856 that Yokohama, not without misgiving, opened her harbor to foreign commerce? To-day Yokohama has a Shakespeare Hotel. At the capital of which Yokohama is the port, they are discussing *Calpurnia* and *Hedda*. Headlong Japan, where the swords of the daimyos have hardly ceased to clash and a woman with a baby strapped to her back drove piles last summer in the narrow streets of Tokyo!

WE OF THE WORLD

BY JOSEPHINE A. MEYER

THE rattle of rain on the roof drowned every other sound in the room, so that even the big clock ticked inaudibly. The woman near the window carefully tucked her scissors under the material she was sewing, out of reach of the lightning, and she glanced once or twice to the sofa where a red and black worsted afghan concealed a sleeping child. In one of these turns she was startled by a shadow at the window, and looked out in time to see a black-clad figure hurry past, across the strip of lawn, to take refuge under the shelter of the little porch at her doorway. The sound of footsteps on the wood dispelled the ridiculous impression that it had been a supernatural being, and she rose, half smiling at her own foolish fright, to open the door. A tall, handsome woman dressed in rich mourning stood outside, trying to protect herself from the muddy spattering of a broken leader.

"There ain't much shelter there," said the mistress of the house hospitably. "You'd better come in."

"Thank you." The victim of the weather smiled and hesitated, "I'm afraid I'm too dreadfully wet. I shall drip all over your carpet."

"It won't hurt it," said the seamstress. "Come in."

"Well, if you don't mind—" She stepped across the threshold and spread out her skirts. "But look!"

The seamstress reached out her hand, small-wristed though rough and needle-scarred, and touched the dress.

"The weather can't hurt that much," she pronounced after a slight

pause. "Just wait till it dries and then brush it out and press it. If you take it off now, I can dry it for you before the stove."

"Oh, you needn't go to all that bother," the visitor answered pleasantly. "Just let me sit in front of the stove myself. That will do as well."

The seamstress led the way through the little room in which she had been sewing to the kitchen beyond. The visitor stopped before the red and black bundle on the sofa.

"Your child?" she whispered, leaning over it.

"Yes, m'm."

"Boy?"

"Yes, m'm."

"How old is he?"

"Two years, m'm."

The child stirred, as though conscious of her gaze, and she drew away.

"I'm scared he ain't quite himself," said the mother, as she placed a chair before the stove. "He seems so heavy-like, an' last night he slept so restless."

"Have you had the doctor?"

"No, m'm. It's such a long ways for him to come." The seamstress rubbed her rough hands together, then, suddenly stooping, threw open the grate. Silhouetted against the rich glow, her head acquired a sudden beauty that vanished when she rose. The rattle of thunder drew her startled eyes to the window.

"He sleeps through that?" asked the lady.

For answer, her hostess crossed to the doorway and looked in, returning, reassured, to find the visitor

removing her dripping hat. She took it and shook the hissing wet from it onto the stove. Its owner's slim, pink-tipped fingers were busy arranging her brown hair where a twitch discovered a thick strand of gray.

"I suppose that's a New York hat," said the seamstress, delicately pulling the sodden folds of silk and crêpe into place.

"Oh, it's so old! I got it at the beginning of the season, and only wear it for roughing about. You see—" the lady smiled charmingly—"I did not expect to pay any calls this afternoon, any more than you to receive."

"I—I never have no visitors." The seamstress flushed darkly and suddenly put the hat upon a near-by chair and crossed to the kitchen dresser. "I live too far away from folks. Do you drink tea, ma'am? It will be good for you after your wetting."

"Thank you, don't trouble——"

"I like to do it." The unringing clatter of the crockery confirmed the visitor's worst fears. "My china ain't much," the other voiced her thought, "but you'll excuse that. I hear New York ladies has their tea every afternoon."

"You've been to New York?"

"Me? No, never." The clattering ceased as the woman's eyes fell away from the present. She brought herself together with a sigh. "I guess it's a pretty wonderful place."

"Yes, wonderful, you might call it—and very terrible."

"Terrible? You mean wicked?"

The woman in black suddenly cast aside affectation and reserve.

"More than wicked," she said. "Hard, cold, deadening. If I had lived in the country all my life, I might have been alive to-day."

"Mercy on us!" gasped the other blankly.

The visitor narrowed her eyes, taking a childishly egotistical pleasure in puzzling the country woman by indulging in the intellectual sentimentality of her own kind.

"My dear, when your soul leaves your body you are dead, are you not?" she said, with pregnant simplicity.

A growing horror was in the other's eyes.

"You mean, when you've been bad?" she interpreted slowly.

The visitor smiled away her dismay.

"No—oh, dear, no! When you cease to use words like bad or good in reference to anything but plays or novels. Have you ever seen a play or read a novel?"

"Yes, ma'am." A flush had come to the seamstress's face. She filled the brown earthen teapot, half concealed behind the steam from the kettle.

"I'm not just trying to puzzle you," said the visitor, and believed she was speaking sincerely. "It is quite true. It is worse to be indifferent to sin than to be sinful."

"Don't talk that way!" exclaimed the seamstress, turning away quickly, with sudden passion.

"Ah, the Church means so much here, in the quiet, where people have time to think and pray," the city lady half mused. "My doctrines are of the town. I am a clever product of a cynical age. I am cursed with an analytical mind and a genius for introspection. I've dissected my soul till I've killed it, so here we are where I started from. I am dead, and you are living. Now let's have our tea—if you're not afraid to sup with a ghost."

The other drew up a rasping chair, and they sat a moment in uncomfortable silence. The visitor spoke first, stirring her tea:

"Shall I tell you what is going to

happen to-night at this very table? When you get through helping the little boy to all your own supper, you will lean over and say to your husband, 'The strangest woman was here to-day. I think she was insane.'"

The country woman clasped her hands tightly on the edge of the oil-cloth table-cover; her head drooping threw her eyes wider open and increased their tragedy as she spoke:

"I haven't got no husband."

It was the visitor's turn to color now, and she felt her lips tremble.

"Oh! Then, we're both widows."

The big eyes hid under the full white lids. The New Yorker's swift mind adjusted the bridge to the gap as she added musically, "But I am childless."

She had to reach across the table and take the other's hand before the hurt eyes again rose to hers.

"Now I can explain very clearly what I meant by having no soul. This crêpe I wear is the only mourning I have to show for my husband. Do you understand? I never cared for him, and never expected to. Moreover, while I am living here in the country, under the pretense of recovering from the shock of grief I suffered at his death, I am really retrenching, economizing, so that I may go back into the world well equipped to find another husband, a payer of my debts. That is what marriage means to us." She sipped her tea laboriously from the heavy cup, and looked up to see that the other woman had knotted her fingers in her lap and was staring into the rain, her lips drawn with anguish. "Oh, well," she added, with a little laugh. "Perhaps I exaggerate a little. Some marry for love—*més-alliances* mostly, they are. A year or two sees the end of their dream. Love wears badly in the city. My friend, if you would guard your soul, stay here where you are."

The woman turned upon her with a fierce laugh and held out her ringless hands.

"My soul!" she cried. "I give that up long ago! I knew he was married. He didn't try to fool me—ever. He told me he loved me, an' if I loved him it would be right. I did. I did. But that ain't goin' to make no difference to God. It didn't make none with common sinners. You talk a lot, but you're shocked at me, an' you ought to be. I'm no good. I guess I couldn't have been from the start. I knew what I was doin'. He never tried to fool me!" She broke down, her face hidden in her folded arms.

The city woman regarded her calmly, and there was a little, hard circle of humorous lines about her eyes.

"Rather a bad break I made, eh?" She smiled openly. Then, leaning over, she touched the heaving shoulder gently. The other woman straightened up, wiped her eyes, and wordlessly attended to the dishes. Her visitor did not attempt to help her other than by pushing her cup in easier reach.

"So that's why you have no visitors," she said. "How do you get on with your work, then—or does he provide for that?"

"I'm savin' that for Davy. He'll need it."

"Quite true. We're so apt to forget Davy. He pays up."

"An' they don't mind bein' fitted here. Hotel people don't know."

"Well, well. Perhaps you could make me a waist or something."

The woman did not answer, and her visitor shrugged her shoulders, smiling.

"What was he like?" she asked after a slight pause, curiously. "A city man, probably. A drummer?"

"He was wealthy, ma'am. A gentleman."

"Of course. They always are. Young, handsome, with a wife who would not have cared, had she known. Possibly one of those cooling love-matches—they are the most dangerous. People who miss it from the start are more considerate."

"He wasn't young."

"Oh, execrable!"—the visitor shuddered.

"He talked like you. His wife hated him—he said they hated each other."

"Real hate? There was a chance for them. But he loved you?"

The woman nodded.

"And left you—as Emerson prescribes?"

The woman hung up the towel and tip-toed to the door.

"Where is he now?" went on the visitor, after a short silence.

"I don't know."

"Ah, like that? Since when?"

"Seven months. He said he'd be back, but he sent a letter instead. In the letter he said he'd never be back."

"The scoundrel!"

"He put in money for Davy and me. He didn't think it such a lot, but it was."

"Money!" The visitor smiled. "Of course. I forgot he was from town."

"What could he care for me?" demanded the other, suddenly harsh. "I wasn't fit for him. I knew it. I knew it wouldn't last. I never expected it to be different, and if I prayed, what right had I? I went in it with my eyes open. I knew from the start—and he never tried to fool me, never!"

"I believe you love him yet," the city woman murmured. "I'm not sure I wouldn't change with you," she added slowly. "Would you like to know how I lost my husband?"

"He *was* your husband, any ways."

"Quite true—and left me his name. He stole a lot of money—swindled—was found out, came home and accused me of driving him to it, and then went off and shot himself." She arranged her skirt to catch the glow of the fire more evenly, and spoke in a careless manner. "I was the center of a pretty scandal till an earthquake or something got the attention of the reporters away from my private affairs. Oh, yes, I have the honor of his name, and all of his debts. You came off a bit better, I think."

"No, I ain't got debts." Suddenly the seamstress stiffened into the attitude of listening. "That's Davy now," she declared, and went quickly into the other room. The visitor followed her and found her kneeling beside the child, who was crying querulously and coughing heavily. His skin was red and blotched, and his eyes singularly bright. "Davy's sick," declared the mother. "It looks like measles. You'd better go, m'm, now that it's clear. You might catch sick."

"Don't worry about me. Where's your doctor?"

"I ain't got none. Davy was never sick before." She smoothed back his soft hair, the light almost of reproach in her eyes. "He's terribly hot."

"It may be nothing. Where is the nearest doctor? Wait—there's one I know at the hotel. I'll send him." She strode into the kitchen and pinned on her still damp hat, without further delay. The mother remained on her knees near the sofa when she passed through the room on her way out. "Good-by"—she held out her hand—"and don't fret about Davy." The woman touched her hand abstractedly, and again bent over her child.

The doctor sat at the next table to the widow in the hotel, and, going

out of the dining-room that night, she stopped to inquire for little Davy.

"I only hope my diagnosis is incorrect," was the unsatisfactory answer.

He did not appear at lunch the next day, and in the afternoon she saw one of the bell-boys leaving the hotel with his suit-case.

"Is the doctor going away?" she demanded.

"I ain't heard," said the boy. "The doctor he just says to take these things over to Rand's cottage an' leave 'em on the porch."

She did not see him at dinner, nor again at lunch next day, whereupon, surprised at her own interest in the matter, she set out to visit Davy's mother and find out for herself how matters were progressing. The doctor was standing on the tiny porch, and as she approached waved her back.

"What's the matter?" she called, stopping.

He went as far as the fence, still keeping some distance between them.

"Don't come any nearer. I thought you were the nurse I sent for. Was there any message for me at the hotel?"

"How should I know?" She shrugged. "Why do you need a nurse?" Unconsciously, she had advanced toward him in speaking, and as she did so he retreated, his hand out warningly.

"Keep back, I tell you," he repeated impatiently. "It's scarlet-fever, and bad at that."

"That poor woman, alone——"

"That poor woman has taken it, herself," answered the man.

She stared. "Who nurses them? You?" she demanded.

"Till some one comes. I can't understand this—delay." He swallowed the oath respectfully, but his drawn, white face would have excused it. "You could help me if you

would," he added, quick to note the pity on her face.

"How?"

"Telephone all over till you get some one to take this case. Nobody 'round here seems to want anything to do with her. They have a grudge, so they salve their consciences and save their hide by calling it a judgment. Bah! So much for religionists."

"And if I can get no one?"

"I can stick it out another night; but I must have some one here in the morning." She was gone before he had the chance to explain further.

Two hours later she stood in the carbolic-sheeted doorway of the sick room, clad in crisp white linen.

"I got tired of telephoning, so I brought the only nurse I knew. I've had scarlet fever. What is there to do?"

Her most difficult task was persuading the doctor to sup and rest. Next to that was the agonizing battle to keep the fever-frenzied mother from raving about the room in search of Davy.

Toward morning the patient grew quieter, and in the dimness of the dawn the doctor appeared at the shadow-hung doorway.

"Now it's your turn," he said.

"A cup of coffee for you, first," responded his self-appointed nurse with professional decision.

She had to search about the kitchen for utensils and in a small tin canister marked "Coffee," her hand came upon a letter. At first the familiarity of the writing struck no chord of emotion in her tired brain. She accepted it as one accepts impossibilities in a dream, and thrust the letter back into its hiding place, disturbed only by the fact that, except for its presence, the canister was empty. But later, when she had found and brewed the coffee and had sipped a mouthful or two, her mind

cleared and the knife of curiosity went home to the hilt.

She rose and procured the crumpled envelope. Half hesitating, she drew forth the folded sheet within. As if to confirm her beyond all doubt, a little faded photograph of her husband dropped out—a snapshot she remembered having taken, herself . . . The note was dated the day of his death and signed by a name not his.

My heart's true wife:

You will never see me again. I cannot tell you why this must be so, but you must believe it. I am sending you my last good-bye here because I have not the courage to see you face to face. I have a great debt to pay to the world and to-day I shall pay it—all. I enclose a small amount for Davy. I had it changed into a single bill. Deposit it for him in some bank and draw against it. If you are careful it will last a long while—at least till he goes to school. *Do not let anyone invest it in stocks for you!*

Life and death might have been different had God been kind to me in time. As it is, I am acting for the best. Good-bye, again, dear love, and do not think I write this because you have grown less dear to me. Your love has been a star in the storm and my only happiness in many years. Good-bye.

She opened the back door to the rising sun and sat on the doorstep, the letter in her lap, her hands cold and her eyes on vacancy.

"Your love has been a star in the storm and my only happiness for many years. . . ."

Had love meant this to him? She gazed dizzily at the handwriting, at the picture. Were they indeed *his*? And she had never really known him—never suspected what lay behind the outer man he showed to her. She shuddered, wondering. A doubt came to her aid. She read the letter through again, and again stared at the date. But under the very wing of death, surely he had written sincerely. . . .

"Life and death might have been so different had God been kind to me in time."

She recalled his last living words to her, the passionate reproach and blame he had hurled at her, and they suddenly became illumined and took form and color. For the first time her horror of the memory had something in it of self-accusation. . . .

But the woman lying in the room beyond? Was it love, after all?

Her lacerated heart attacked bitterly, with fierce derision. We of the world—we are not blind! Bah! We see such love by a truer, uglier name! Love! . . . And then, the "small amount for Davy."

. . . Ruthlessly her fingers delved into the envelope for the tissue-paper-wrapped packet she had missed. It was a large bill, a fortune to one of whom poverty had been so familiar a friend. So we are all bad at heart—rotten with greed and lust and pride and the rest of the tragic Seven. She shuddered and covered her eyes, and thus sat till the sun had grown high enough to warm her body through the crushed linen dress. She basked for a while in the good comfort of it. . . .

The morning splendor had descended upon the rude little garden when she looked up—upon the sweet-pea vines braced tenderly against the wind, the frail, flaming poppies, the staid, wet-eyed pansies that crouched at the feet of spice-breathing pinks or flamboyant sweet-william. On the dull earthen path-way, so narrow none but a child might walk it unblundering, a crimson tin pail caught the rays of the sun. It was half full of rain-water, evidence of its idleness since that first day when it had stormed. There had been an element of kindness then in the affair, the kindness and delicacy that had fostered these useless, beautiful things, something fine enough to perceive their potency. Were these placed here for Davy—his son? . . .

A robin called his mate and sent a sick thrill quivering through her. She drew her hands across her throbbing eyes, and it was as though another sun had risen and shown her all, relentlessly, naked in the glare. She saw herself, tiny and self-centered, her heart cramped with bitter intolerance. She had asked all and given nothing. It was not even worldly, for in the world we must make a feint at giving. He had stolen primarily to minister to her pride, and it was her pride that turned to pitiless scorn and hate—the scorn and hate that drove him further into the dark. And that other?

"I give my soul up long ago . . . I went in it with my eyes open. . . . I knew it wouldn't last. . . . I never expected it to be dif'rent, an' if I prayed, what right had I? . . ."

"God!" she whispered, white-lipped, to the sun, and the word was strange in her mouth. "Is this sin, God?—God?"

The answer was in her suddenly outstretched arms, the violent trembling that crushed her into that attitude of despair, longing, and self-abasement the masters have painted at the foot of the Cross. Even with the coming of understanding was the promise of forgiveness and peace . . .

The doctor's hand fell upon her bowed shoulder.

"This is not fair of you," he said gently.

She hastily thrust the letter into her blouse. He appeared not to notice the havoc passion had wrought on her face.

"I—I thought you might have needed me," she lied brokenly. "I can rest when the nurse comes."

"I have something difficult to beg of you. She is raving. The cad that wronged her was married, and

she knew it. She is haunted with the sin against his wife."

She raised herself with his aid; her ears roared and her mouth was dry so that it was agony to speak.

"You—you—want—me—to play—I—was—his—wife?"

"It is a case of life and death. Do I ask too much? He would forgive you, did he know—surely."

A horrible choking of laughter seized her, and she smothered it by actually gripping her twitching throat with her hands.

"He would—— Go in. I'm coming."

The doctor marveled a little at her hysteria, and doubted the wisdom of his demand, but it was not a case for tact. He supported her to the sick-room, where, heedless of his protest, she threw herself to her knees at the bedside.

"I was his wife," she said steadily, holding the fever-burnt hands. "I was his wife by law. I have known bitterer sin than yours. I forgive you as I cry God's pardon for myself."

The sick woman regarded her tensely.

"You?" she whispered hoarsely. "He's dead? Ah, I knew. . . ."

"I found his letter to you. The hurt we do each other by our sinning! God asks no more of us. Let us be merciful when we can!"

"You—and you forgive me?"

"Yes—yes—yes!"

"And—and Davy?"

"Oh!" her passionately flowing tears choked her—"can you think—a little child?"

"If I die, could you——"

"Live! You must live! Together we must build up in Davy all we have thrown away—make him worthy to be our expiation. You have not sinned so deeply as I."

"How can you?" whispered the sick woman softly. "How good you

are! An angel! I don't deserve it
—I don't deserve it."

She began to cry steadily, as the happy do. The doctor left the room to answer a knock on the outer door. Against every law of health and caution, the woman of the world kissed her sister on the forehead.

The doctor returned with a quiet woman who carried a suit-case.

"This is the nurse," he said. "You had better go now. You have been under a terrific strain, and you're all unstrung."

"If you don't mind," she answered, "I'd rather stay and help."

I SAT APART

BY LYDIA GODFREY

THE children danced a merry ring.
I watched them whirl, I heard them sing,
"Derry down, oh, derry down!
The bride shall wear a myrtle crown."
Benumbed I sat apart.

Three mothers chatted 'neath a tree
With matronly complacency:
"My child is tall, and yours are fair.
Your son stands with his father's air."
But envy gloomed my heart.

The ring gives way. See each child hie,
An airy, darting dragonfly.
"Derry down, oh, derry down!
The wife shall wear a velvet gown."
I moaned my empty fate.

Their heads 'gainst mothers' breasts they fling,
Those ample breasts that poets sing,
"The pliant bosom veined with blue
How tenderly doth comfort you."
My clenched teeth were aminate.

Was *his* child like these, lithe and fair,
His lassie whom I might see ne'er?
"Derry down, oh, derry down!
She hath no babe to drive to town."
I clutched my unfilled breast.

But once again the quickening thrill
Of his words pierced my heart's gray chill:
"Above all earthly passion flows
Our ideal love, which no one knows."
My spent soul smiled, at rest.

"TOOTIE" ON INCREASED EFFICIENCY

BY CAROLYN WELLS

Author of "Anybody But Anne," etc.

GOOD morning, Miss Bodkin. Come right on in. Excuse my having my head in a bowl of water, but I've been shampooing my hair, and now I'm rinsing it in clear rain water. Oh, excuse me! *Did* I spatter you? Such a time as I had getting the rain water! You know it's been so dry for weeks, and then yesterday it poured cats and dogs. So I said, "Now is my chance," but I couldn't collect much water, after all. The leaders leak, and we don't have a regular cistern. I think they ought to pipe rain water into people's houses. Or I'd like to build a watershed. I think that would be more useful than our artesian well.

No, I *don't* often shampoo my own hair, but I've been reading so much about Lost Motion and Increased Efficiency, that I made up my mind I'd try to accomplish more things at once. So, as you were coming to-day, I decided to have you fit my frocks, and I'd do my hair at the same time, and meanwhile make notes for my paper to read at the club. Usually, one wastes so much time when a dressmaker is in the house, and now that I'm studying the Ethics of Standardization, I want to do my part in the World's Uplift, I'm sure. Do you know, I used to be awful wobbly-minded, but I've learned to discard vain dreams and achieve results. Oh, yes, it's all in a book. I read it as fast as I could tear through it, and it helped me like everything.

Yes, you go ahead. Of course I can't see anything with my head in this bowl, but I have to rinse it thoroughly or my hair stays all stiff. Can't you be selecting designs or planning out trimmings or cutting a lining or something till I can get my head out? My gracious! there goes the soap-dish on the floor! It's awfully awkward doing one's own hair! Yes, Miss Bodkin, *do* help me a minute. I thought you'd offer sooner. Suppose you wrap this towel round my head, while I get the soap out of my eyes. Oh, stop, Miss Bodkin! You've let all my wet hair fall down the back of my neck! Oo-oh! It feels like a wet alligator! Take another towel! My kimona is dripping wet all down the back!

Now you go back to your cutting out, and I'll twist this Turkish towel round like a turban. There! Now I'll see about the sewing, and I'll dry my hair afterward. Sometimes I stick my head out of the skylight to dry, but there's no sunshine to-day. It's fun when Tottie May shampoos the same day and sticks her head out of her skylight. We can shout across quite easily. The last time she said—Oh, yes, I *am* going to give you your work. Now, let me see—this peach-colored chiffon—yes, I think we'll do this first. It was a remnant—I bought it at such a bargain.

My hair has all tumbled down! And it's still dripping wet! Oogh! It feels like a dozen raw oysters had slipped down my back! Well, I'll

bundle it into a bathing-cap, for I *must* see about this dress. There, if you lay the pattern on that way, you can get it out. Why, if here isn't my blessed little Fido dogsy-wogsy! Well, *who* was a cunnin'? Yes, indeed, indeedy! So he wuzzy! Look at him sit up, Miss Bodkin. Isn't he the ducky-dear? Oh, yes, about the dress. Well, if there really isn't enough goods, let's use it as far as it goes, and piece out with a hem of satin. Lots of people do that. Wow! My cap leaks, and the water is just streaming down my shoulders! I simply *must* dry my hair now, so you must cut out that goods whatever way you think best. Of course I expect you to have *some* ideas of your own. Jumpy downy, Fido-dido. Yes, um wuz um cunnin'. Oh, I forgot, I want you to fix over a gown the very first thing of all, so I can wear it this afternoon to a bridge party. It doesn't need much done to it.

Yes, a bridge at Mrs. Smart's. She always gives afternoon affairs because she hasn't a very becoming husband. He's—well, he's sort of hand-painted—if you know what I mean. Now, Mrs. Lovell, she always gives evening parties, because her husband is a very tasty-looking person. He dresses up the atmosphere tremendously.

When I marry, I shall look out first for a man who is an artistic decoration in the home. We're learning that in our domestic science class. I mean, about harmonious house-furnishing, and if a husband isn't the principal thing to be made to harmonize with the other furnishings, I don't know what is. Perhaps one of those long, slap-dash bows—they *do* add an air—or, I have a lace bolero. No? Well, when I bought that thing, I felt sure I'd never use it! I've tried it with three dress-makers in the house. I guess there's

nothing so hopeless as a lace bolero!

But this gown isn't so very old, and I want you to fix it up some way. I'll try it on, and then you can tell better. Don't you adore these little dingly-dangly rosebuds just dripping off the berthé? Yes, I suppose they *are* last year's style, but Mrs. Smart won't know that. She's the kind of a woman who would wear a black grenadine—if you know what I mean.

Oh, wait, you're not hooking it right! The inner lining hooks first over across onto that under belt thing. Then bring that left side panel over across back again the other way, and then hook that—but the trimming hooks under it first, and then the bow laps over, don't you see? No, not *that* way. Oh, it twists my neck off to look in the mirror behind me—but we *must* get it right. I wish I had a neck like a hen, don't you know how they spin around? Well, you'll have to unhook it all and begin again. If you don't start right, you'll never get it—and I expect you omitted those little snap things. They have to be done first of all. Yes, I know it's too tight, that's what I want you to fix about it, but I won't pant another mouthful, if I have to have my hips *planed* off. Do you know, when I first heard about all this fuss over Waste Motion, I thought they meant some kind of physical culture exercises or Swedish movements or something to reduce!

Now I'll take a long breath and squeeze myself in. There! Didn't you hook it that time? No? Well, I don't believe we *can*, then! I don't see how people keep so thin—there's Mrs. Smart, she's simply nothing but a spine. Oh, there's the telephone!

Yes. Hay-o! Yes. Oh, Miss Featherton. Hats? Now? Yes, indeed; send them right up.

Oh, rapture! Miss Bodkin, some new hats are coming! I'll try them on, and you can help me choose. Oh, isn't it gay? Don't you just adore hats?

Excuse my flying around like a flea with St. Vitus's dance, but I'm simply crazy over hats! They're a lottery, though. You get one—Good gracious! I forgot my hair was all wet. *Do* help me dry it! Fan it, won't you? Wait! I'll stick my head out of the window! Oh, it's begun to rain! I wish I had an electric drier, but they're not much good. Do you suppose the vacuum-cleaner would help any? What *shall* I do? If I spoil the hats—

Oh, here are the hats! Bring them all in, Jane—all the boxes. Oh, Miss Bodkin, *do* look at this one! Isn't it a fright, with that stiff, ugly feather? Looks as if it were meant for a suffragette.

Oh, no, *I'm* not going to be a suffragette! I'd rather get married. Now look at this one. It's just covered with aigrettes. I won't wear those! Think of the poor dumb animals they have to shoot to get them! Oh, I'm *very* particular about such things—I won't even wear shot silk on my hats. I'm awfully fond of animals. Our society is going to see about providing muzzles for wolves, so they won't eat things that disagree with them—at least, I think that's it. Now, this red hat is a cracker-jack! Corking class to it, isn't there? I got that phrase from my friend, Mr. Dow, but I'm afraid it's slang. I can't wear red, though; you see, my fatal gift is so blonde.

Now I'll try on this black hat. It seems to have all the feathers in the world on it! But it requires a pretty face to wear this. Oh, Miss Bodkin, *do* you think so? Well, in a half light I'm not so bad. Oh, yes, the *men* say so; but you know what men *are*! Why, there's a perfect horde

of them sitting out on the curbstone now, each with a pistol at his temple, waiting for my answer. Well, some day I'll be—For a Good Boy. Oh, how about this draped hat? It is a dream, but it requires a certain setting, doesn't it? I'll have to concentrate on this—go into the silence, you know. Mrs. Maudleyn told me how; she's such an uplifter, you know—she never thinks anything that isn't new. My gracious! If Fidums hasn't played medicine ball with that taupe malines hat! He's torn it to bits! Oh, *can't* you fix it up? Never mind my dresses—*do* fix that hat! There's the telephone again!

Oh, hay-o, Totty! No, darling, I can't possibly see you now. I'm—I'm taking massage, and I need quiet. So sorry. Yes, dear. Good-by.

You see, if she saw these hats, she'd want the very one I want, so I simply *couldn't* let her come over here. Yes, I *do* want you to fix that for Bridge—you can do it without trying it on me again. Just let out the seams and things and renovate the sleeves a little; and if the skirt could be made a little scanter—Yes, it does look narrow now, but—oh, well, you know what skirts are. Yes, that's so, I do have to sit down at Bridge. Well, leave it as it is, then. But how about cutting out the collar? That would give it an air. Oh, fix it any way you like. I've so much to do, I can't decide these things for you. Really, Miss Bodkin, you ought to try to rely on your own judgment more.

You see, I have to study my question for the domestic science class to-morrow. It's the most fun; we learn how to do all those ridiculous things they tell you about in the woman's papers, and we learn to save motion, and purify politics, and

all sorts of things about the house.

Then we can have a question, you know, and this is mine. We're studying Economic Conditions as they affect women. All the economy I've learned so far is to cut the strings near the knots when the bundles come in. Clever, isn't it? I always used to cut them right in the middle. Well, as I was telling you, this is my question—Oh, there's that telephone again!

Hay-o! Yes, Miss Featherton, the hats came. No, I don't care for any of them much. And that taupe malines one seems to be mussy. Is it a last season's hat? Just fresh from Paris? My! It must have been badly boxed—or—well, you can see when it comes back, how mussy it looks. Yes, you may send for them at once. No, I don't want any of them. Good-by.

I *do* like this black one, but if I send it back perhaps she'll reduce—

Oh, hay-o! Is this you, Mr. Dow? Oh, well, Roddy, then. Go motor-ing? Now? And lunch at the

country club? Yes, with pleasure. No, I haven't a thing on for the afternoon! May I take Fidums? He's pining for a whizz. Oh, yes, you *do* love him, too—such a booflum dog-gums! Yes, I'll be ready in an hour. Oh, yes. Thank you. Good-by.

Now, Miss Bodkin, *do* help me out, won't you? Get me into my frock, and I'll wear one of these new hats. And won't you please telephone Mrs. Smart that I can't come to her Bridge? Oh, tell her I was suddenly called away to an important meeting—and, indeed, my meeting with Mr. Dow is important—and then you fix over that gown, won't you, and cut out the new one? And *do* mend up that malines hat! Yes, my hair is almost dry—if you'll just fan it a little while you sew.

Now I must *fly*! I'm *so* glad I could help you as much as have. I really deserve a little outing now. *Do* make over that gown to look real smart, won't you? And don't let it have a home-made look, *whatever* you do!



MAGIC

BY JOHN P. SJOLANDER

ALL day the sky has hung a leaden cup
Turned upside down. But now at eve behold!
The Great Magician tilts the far edge up:
Its sides are silver and its brim is gold.

Lippincott's Magazine

PROGRESSIVE

WITH this number of Lippincott's a new era in the history of the magazine begins. Our readers will recognize a change in the type-page, and a variation in the cover design. They will moreover find that, while the best traditions of the magazine are preserved, the table of contents shows a certain progressive spirit. The Editorial Offices have been moved to New York, with the distinct advantage of being in the center of American literary activities, and it is our purpose to turn this to the benefit of our readers.

¶ There will be a definite policy to continue Lippincott's as a vigorous exponent of the best in fiction and current thought, a monthly magazine reflecting the tastes of well-bred, healthy-minded Americans. For nearly half a century Lippincott's has maintained a position of dignity among magazines of the better class, and there will be no sacrifice of this dignity in the years to come.

¶ The work of many famous writers has appeared in Lippincott's. Such works as Amelie Rives's "The Quick or the Dead?," Rudyard Kipling's "The Light That Failed," James Lane Allen's "The Choir Invisible," Dr. S. Weir Mitchell's "New Samaria"—stories that in book form now occupy honorable places in many a well-selected library—were first published in this magazine.

¶ Established in 1868, the career of Lippincott's was begun in the years immediately succeeding the Civil War. It has seen the United States during the most remarkable period of its history, and looked upon the advent of most of the great scientific wonders of the age. The first editor was not annoyed by telephone calls from contributors, for that indispensable instrument was not invented for several years after he took his seat. He had many years to wait before he went from his home to his office in an electric car, and it was long before the incandescent lamp gleamed above his desk in the late winter afternoons. In those days his fiction held no such characters as chauffeurs, aviators, wireless operators, turkey-trotters and cabaret dancers. The typewriter was yet to be perfected, and manuscripts were written by hand.

¶ If life to-day is more complex, it is better systematized, fuller of variety and consequent interest. Lippincott's has advanced with the times. With the present number it quickens its pace.

¶ Criticism, whether adverse or favorable, is helpful, and readers of the new Lippincott's will confer a favor on the Editor by writing him their views of the magazine.

